

THE PLACE OF DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

IN THE

INDIAN CHURCH

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Title of Thesis..... THE PLACE OF DOGMATIC THEOLOGY IN THE INDIAN CHURCH : A Study of the
Development of Indian Christian Theology and an Assessment of its Significance.

(1) The Question.

The Christian Church in India appears to conform to the western pattern in many features of its life, and notably in its theological thought. For this reason much of its evangelistic proclamation among Hindus is ineffective, as the language and thought-forms used strike no response in the Hindu listener. What are the indications of a different approach in the Indian Church, of a formulation of theology which, while remaining true to the Christian faith, uses Hindu vocabulary and thought-forms in a constructive way, as the Church of the early centuries appropriated Greek terminology in its effort to win the Greek world for Christ ?

(2) The Survey.

The first part of the thesis (pp.16 - 586) seeks to assemble the evidence for an answer to this question by a survey of the development of Indian Christian theology in the work of selected Christian theologians, but with reference also to those Hindu reformers who sought to use and restate Christian doctrines without themselves joining the Church. The survey attempts to provide a continuous narrative covering the development of Christian theology from the earliest days of the S-yrrian Church in Travancore, through the work of the pioneer Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries to the outstanding figures of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who are treated in more detail. Special attention is given to Ram Mohan Roy, Keshub Chunder Sen, Nehemiah Goreh, the Christian bhakti-poets (especially Krishna Pillai and Narayan Vaman Tilak), Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, Sundar Singh, A.J.Appasamy, P.Chenchiah, V.Chakkara and P.D.Devanandan. Briefer studies of figures like Swami Vivekananda and J.N.Farquhar are added in an effort to set the development of Indian Christian theology in its historical context, and the section concludes with a survey of recent Indian theological writing.

The work of these theologians is presented according to a schema cover-

Use other side if necessary.

ing the following doctrines: God and Creation; Man and Sin; the Person of Christ; the Work of Christ; the Holy Spirit; the Trinity; the Bible; the Church and Sacraments; the Christian Life; Eschatology; the Relation of Christianity and Hinduism. By means of this comparative study certain distinctive lines of thought, differing considerably from western formulations, are seen to emerge.

(3) Conclusions.

The second part of the thesis (pp.587 - 686) is an attempt to evaluate the distinctive Indian contribution to the understanding of the doctrines included in the schema. The use which certain theologians have made of Indian philosophical systems - notably those of Sankara, Ramanuja and Aurobindo - is assessed; and various Indian terms are singled out as containing rich possibilities for the proclamation of the Gospel and also for the construction of an Indian dogmatic theology. Such terms include the word Brahman for God (though with reservations), especially in its description as sat, cit, ananda; nirguna and saguna used dialectically; Isvara as a title for Christ; purusa as a term in the realm of personality; avatara; karma-samsara and maya (in certain limited contexts); sakti; atman, jivatman, paramatman; antaryamin; moksa; pramana.

The very substantial body of Indian theological writing examined in the survey is seen as the beginning of an Indian Church Dogmatics, but not in the sense that it is a mere translation into Indian terms of western dogmatics, nor a systematisation of doctrinal statements approved by the various Indian Churches. Rather it is an attempt to go back to the fundamental truths of the Christian faith as they are revealed in the Bible, and - in a process of theological logic which is related to the Indian heritage but controlled from within by the object, namely God's self-revelation in Christ - to express those truths in language and thought-forms which will be intelligible and convincing to Hindu thinkers, as the theology of the early Church was to the Greeks.

The Indian Church should now be given every encouragement to proceed with the development of such a ~~theology~~ dogmatic theology. The work already done indicates that a theology of this kind is of real value not only within India but beyond.

THE PLACE OF DOGMATIC THEOLOGY IN THE INDIAN CHURCH

A Study of the Development of Indian Christian Theology
and
an Assessment of its Significance

by

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R. H. S. Boyd.

Belfast,

10th May, 1966.

Note on the Spelling of Indian Words

Diacritical marks have been avoided in the text. Indian words are underlined, and are listed in the Glossary, which gives the spelling as found in the text, a transliteration with diacritical marks of the Sanskrit or current word, and a brief definition.

For some well known names such as Krishna, and certain words which are familiar in English usage, such as ashram, rishi, swami, etc., the traditional anglicised spelling has been retained in the text.

Certain proper names, notably Ram Mohan Roy, Keshub Chunder Sen and Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, have been retained in the form used by their contemporaries, though incorrect according to modern methods of transliteration.

In quotations from other authors the original spelling has been retained, even though this is frequently different from that used elsewhere in the text.

Special attention is drawn to the confusing series of words Brahman (Brahma); Brähma (Brähmo); Brahmā; and Brāhman (Brāhmin), whose distinct meanings are listed in the Glossary.

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THE PLACE OF DOGMATIC THEOLOGY IN THE INDIAN CHURCH

CHAPTER I

I N T R O D U C T I O N

For many years Western theologians have been accustomed to look forward to the day when the Indian Christian Church will begin to make its distinctive contribution to ecumenical theology. Bishop Westcott believed that the most profound commentary on the Fourth Gospel was still to be written, and that it could not be written until an Indian theologian would undertake the task.⁽¹⁾ Always this hope has been placed in the future, and it has been tacitly assumed that this characteristic Indian theology has not yet begun to emerge. Even Indian theologians have adopted this tentative view, regarding their writings more as the preparation of the ground, the prolegomena to theology rather than of the stuff of theology itself. The pages of Chenchiah abound with expressions like "Indian Christian Theology can only arise when....."⁽²⁾ and other writers even apologise for the fact that the Indian Church has not yet produced a single heresy,⁽³⁾ and only one serious controversy, that on the status and use of the Old Testament.

The Western Captivity of the Indian Church

This deliberately-fostered impression that Indian theology has not yet emerged is reinforced by other factors. There is no doubt that to an outside

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- (1) E. Asirvatham: Christianity in the Indian Crucible (YMCA, Calcutta, 1957) p.118.
(2) e.g. "The Indian Christian Theological Task" in Guardian, 2.1.1947.
(3) e.g. V.E. Devadutt: "What is an Indigenous Theology?" in Ecum. Review, Autumn 1949.

observer the Church in India seems to be dominated by Western attitudes and modes of thought. In Church architecture, Church organisation, Church Services, Church music, Church publications, Western forms and attitudes still seem to predominate. The ancient Syrian Church of Kerala is little known in the north of India, and even within it theological thought tends to wear a Western aspect. The feature of Indian Christian life and witness which has become most familiar to Western observers is the Church union movement and the liturgical developments associated with it, and publications in this field, however great their intrinsic worth, have tended to be framed in Western theological terminology and modes of thought, even when the writers were Indian.

Again, the teaching given in theological colleges and Bible schools throughout India has been, and still is, dominated by Western theology, as a glance at any syllabus will show. The result is that the preaching of the average Indian minister or evangelist reflects the Western theological categories in which he has been trained. It is a common experience to hear Western visitors say, after attending a Church service in India, "It was all so familiar: how touching to hear the same old hymns sung in a different language!" There are, as we shall see, many exceptions to this tendency, yet the charge has often been made against Indian Christianity, and still is made, that it denationalises a man and uproots him from the cultural heritage which is his by right.

Indigenization

Many efforts have therefore been made - and not just in recent years, as is sometimes imagined - to make the Church "indigenous" in its life and worship. In the Syrian Church this effort is not needed, for it has been

"indigenus" for longer than the Church in Britain or Germany. But there have been experiments in many other areas - churches built in Indian architectural styles⁽¹⁾, Christian "ashrams", and, of course, - from the earliest days of Western missionary activity - the use of Christian lyrics in Indian metres and sung to Indian tunes accompanied by Indian instruments. There have been Indian Christian poets in every area, and Indian Christian sadhus. All these have had their importance, and all have helped to mould the pattern of Indian Christian life. Over the years, many millions of Indian Christians have lived, prayed, read the Bible, worshipped together and witnessed by the quality of their life and their devotion. They have found many opportunities of expressing their Christian faith in truly Indian ways. Yet the crucial question remains - is there a truly Indian expression of theological thought?

Indian Theology has "Arrived"

Today it is manifest that a body of Indian theological writing exists which demands serious attention. This is not to say that there is any single authoritative system, an Indian Summa Theologica or Institute of the Christian Religion or Kirchliche Dogmatik which might become the "subordinate standard" of the Indian Church. In the days of Tertullian, of Clement and Origen and of the Antioch-Alexandria controversy, there was no such "summa" and yet no one would assert that there was no "dogmatic theology." A distinctive Indian theology has emerged, in a remarkably rich diversity of forms and modes of thought, related, as was the theology of Origen and Augustine, to the main philosophical schools of the surrounding culture. In the following pages it will be our task to unravel the origins and examine the structure of this theology.

(1) cp. J.F. Butler: "The Theology of Church Building in India", in IJT V/2 (Oct. 1956) and further in IJT VIII/4 (Oct. 1959).

The fear of "dogmatism"

A factor which has tended to discourage the emergence of a formulated Christian theology in India is the widespread dislike, among both Hindus and Christians, for anything "dogmatic". This attitude has received considerable impetus from the writings of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan who frequently criticises the Christian religion because of its tendency to fix its doctrinal categories.⁽¹⁾ Christianity is thought of - perhaps with some justification - as an authoritarian religion which lays down certain dogmas as essential, and demands uncritical acceptance of them as the prerequisite of salvation. Jesus is accepted as a great religious teacher and inspiring leader, perhaps even as an incarnation of God, but the creeds, confessions and doctrinal expositions of the organised, institutional Church are felt to be alien to the Indian cultural and religious tradition, and in fact to represent a somewhat low form of human religious development.

Experience and Dogma

Some Indian Christian theologians have taken this criticism to heart, and have themselves attempted to avoid "dogmatic" theology, at the same time making radical criticisms of such traditional doctrines as the Chalcedonian Christological formula. There is a tendency - influenced perhaps more by the Hindu inclination to regard anubhava (experience) as of primary importance in revelation than by Western theologians like Schleiermacher or Otto - to make direct experience of God and of Christ the primary criterion in theology, and to give little or no importance to official credal statements, even those of the undivided Church of the first five centuries. At the same time these writers have felt obliged to discuss most of the classical Christian doctrines,

(1) e.g. "The absolute character of theological doctrine is incompatible with the mysterious character of religious truth." S. Radhakrishnan, The Bhagavadgita, p.142.

and in the process have given clear expression to their own views. We shall therefore attempt, in this enquiry, to give some thought to the question of the necessity and validity of "credal" statements, and of the extent to which a particular formulation of belief must be regarded as binding on the Church in all ages and in all places.

The Philosophical Affiliation of Theological Systems

We shall see that Indian theologians have related themselves to a number of Hindu philosophical systems, and we must ask about the possibility and legitimacy of this type of relationship, in Western as well as Indian theology. Western theology has never been able to dissociate itself from philosophy, from the time of the Platonism of Justin Martyr onwards. Plato lies behind Augustine, Aristotle behind Aquinas and Calvin: right down to the days of idealism, existentialism and logical positivism no theologian, not even those like Barth who have tried to break free from Philosophy, has succeeded in dissociating himself from the philosophical presuppositions of certain schools. In the West, the philosophy with which theology has been associated has not necessarily been Christian philosophy: theologians have felt the need, in their systematic statements, of using the language and thought-patterns of a Plato, or an Aristotle, of a Kant, a Hegel, a Goudart, a Durer, a Wittgenstein. So far as an Indian theologian like Chenchiah is concerned, the formula of Chalcedon, with its underlying philosophy of substance and accident, is pure pagan Aristotle. Why then should an Indian theologian feel bound by formulae which have no essential relationship to the Christian revelation? May it not be possible for Indian theologians, while remaining faithful to the Biblical "deposit", to work out their apologetic and their systematic theological statement in the terminology of certain schools

of Hindu thought? We shall see in our enquiry that this process has in fact been carried out, and we must estimate how far it has been successful.

Hinduism and "Systematic" Statement

The point is often made that "dogmatic" theology" is totally alien to the Indian mind. Frequently such statements are based on a wrong idea of what "dogmatic" theology" is. It is, however, claimed that Hinduism is not dogmatic in the sense that traditional Christianity is. We must investigate the truth of this claim, for in fact there is a great body of Hindu theological literature, representative of different schools of thought which is thoroughly "systematic" in its presentation. It is clear that the logical, ordered arrangement of one's beliefs is not a process alien to Hinduism. Is it then legitimate for critics, whether Hindu or Christian, to criticise Christianity because its theology is presented in "systematic" form? Or is it not rather true that an important task of the Indian Church is the formulation of precisely such a body of "systematic" theology?

The "Secularisation" of Greek Religion in the Environment of the Early Church

As we reflect on the process by which Christianity in the early centuries became acclimatised in the Greek world, and by which it made use of certain categories of Greek thought, we are struck by the double fact of its acceptance of "secularised" Greek philosophy and philosophical terminology, and its complete rejection of Greek religion and mythology. Over a long period Greek religion was gradually "secularised". Philosophy was separated from what had once been a religio-philosophic unity. The religious content - which had already been deeply influenced by "secularisation" right from the time of Aristophanes and Euripides - developed into a cultural, literary,

artistic entity, "incapsulated" and isolated, except in the Orphic and mystery traditions, from that living, existential faith which transforms men's lives. The mediaeval monks who concealed their copies of Virgil in the thatch of their cells, and read them surreptitiously when religious authority was not looking, were not reverting to Graeco-Roman paganism, but were simply seeking an artistic, cultural outlet and stimulus of which their monastic life deprived them. The old gods died, but their ghosts passed into the literary and cultural heritage of Europe, and it was the Church, strangely enough, which preserved them. Greek religion was isolated from philosophy, "secularised", preserved, and eventually became incorporated, at the Renaissance, into modern European culture. Christian poets, philosophers, painters and even theologians have not hesitated to use "incapsulated" Greek religion and mythology in their works. From John Milton to T. S. Eliot, and even to theologians like Reinhold Niebuhr, the types and stories of Greek religious mythology have provided a background and illustration for Christian exposition. Christian culture has seldom banished the Muses and the Graces, and the stuff of Greek tragedy has at times served to expound and to deepen our understanding of the work of Christ.

The Secularisation of religious Hinduism

Is a comparable development of Hinduism likely? The usual answer is to say that Hindu philosophy and religion are more closely interwoven than were Greek. Whereas Greek philosophy was often almost entirely secular, Hindu philosophy is religion, and Sankara and Ramana are regarded as great religious figures as much as philosophers.

And yet it is an obvious fact that there is at present a rapidly-moving process of secularisation going on within Hinduism. Outwardly this

tendency can be seen in the creation of the secular state in India. The official abolition of caste, and the increasing tendency to make legislation uniform and so valid for all communities, in distinction from the earlier communal laws, is an indication of the lessening grip of religious sanction, and its replacement by universal, "secular" legislation. Simultaneously, the process of general "secularisation", which has been going on steadily since the days of Ram Mohan Roy a century and a half ago, is still gaining momentum, and recent studies have revealed that the present generation of educated young people is almost as "secularised" as its counterpart in the West, and has little knowledge of, or interest in, the traditional piety of popular Hinduism, or even in its more philosophic forms. For many people today the chief medium for the assimilation of Hindu religious mythology is the cinema, where epics and musicals based on the great stories and dramas of Hinduism are a favourite spectacle. The current popularity of similarly spectacular Biblical films in the West does not lessen the fact that this form of Hinduism is almost entirely "secularised" and "incapsulated" and is of cultural rather than of deeply religious significance.

Philosophical Hinduism would seem to have cut itself off very largely from the traditional mythology. The writings of Sri Aurobindo, or of Dr. Radhakrishnan, though using the terminology of the traditional philosophic systems, do not use "mythology" except perhaps for purposes of illustration. Philosophical Hinduism has been fairly thoroughly "demythologised". This is not simply the victory of advaita over the conception of a religion of devotion to a personal God. It is to a very large extent a victory of demythologised Hinduism over the myth-filled tradition.

Christian Theological Statement and "Secularised" Hinduism

It would seem, therefore, as though Hinduism were already well statted

on the path followed by Greek religion. And so we are led to the question whether or not it is legitimate for Christian theologians to use and adapt the categories of what still purports to be religious Hinduism, and yet is already very largely secularised. What, indeed, is the real meaning of the word "Hindu"? Does it describe the fully mythological Hindu religion? Does it describe certain philosophico-religious systems? Or is it simply a synonym for "Indian culture"? We shall find that some Indian Christian theologians, notably Brahmabandhab, have believed that Christianity was not incompatible with cultural, "secularised" Hinduism. We shall have to attempt to follow up the implications of this point of view.

The Concerns of Indian Christian Theology

The Indian Christian theologian, like all true and effective theologians, has two chief concerns. The first is to remain faithful to his experience and knowledge of Jesus Christ, who is the centre of his life, and this involves him in loyalty to those sources through which he has come to know and love Christ. Secondly, he is concerned to interpret and proclaim his understanding and experience in such a way that other men may come to the same knowledge. In order to do this he must proclaim Christ and the significance of Christ in such a way that his contemporaries and compatriots may fully understand the message, and this involves him in the problems of effective communication and persuasive proclamation. It is his duty to seek to remove all hindrances to the effective proclamation and the full reception of Jesus Christ by his fellow men. We must, therefore, in this enquiry, estimate the success of the Indian Christian theologians in the work which they have undertaken, noting at the same time some of the evidence of history about similar approaches and similar situations in the past.

The Scope of the Present Enquiry

The aim of our enquiry is, then, to assess the extent and significance of Indian Christian theology, to consider the objections which have been raised against its methods and its effectiveness, and to draw from it what encouragement and insight we can for the great task of proclaiming Christ not only in India, but in every land and culture in the world. We must make it clear at the outset that, important and integral as the Muslim contribution to Indian culture has been, we are here restricting ourselves to the relation of Christianity to the Hindu cultural and religious background.

The first and longer part of our study will be devoted to a survey of Indian Christian theology. How did Christianity first come to India, what was the theology of those who brought it, and what has been the theological heritage of the oldest Indian Christian tradition, the Syrian? What then of the theology of the European missions, beginning with the arrival of Francis Xavier in the mid-sixteenth century, and continuing through the Halle Lutherans of Tranquebar at the beginning of the eighteenth century and the Baptists of Serampore at its end? We shall go on to consider the great Protestant missionary movement of the nineteenth century, surveying the gradual rise of a truly Indian theology, written by Indians for Indians. At every stage our primary concern will be to study the response of India to the Christian gospel. It is only occasionally, therefore, that we shall pay attention to the writings of Western missionaries in India; our special task is rather to present as fully as possible the theological writing which has arisen as Indian thinkers have accepted Christ and the Gospel, and have sought to interpret Him to their fellow-countrymen.

We shall find that some of the earliest and most stimulating Indian theological writing is by such great Hindu reformers as Ram Mohan Roy and

Keshub Chunder Sen, who struggled to understand the significance of Christ, and to relate it in a constructive way to reformed Hinduism. One of the most unusual chapters in the history of Christian theology is the effort of these serious, honest, "secularised" Hindu thinkers to give a living expression to their understanding of Christ. Their work has had a remarkable influence on the course of Indian theological thought, even amongst those whose ~~whose~~ primary objective was their refutation.

In order to understand the "climate" in which Indian Christian theology has grown towards maturity it will be necessary for us to glance also at other leading figures of the "Indian Renaissance", some of whom have had an attitude to Christianity considerably less friendly than these two pioneers. Figures on whose work we shall touch are Swami Dayanand Sarasvati, founder of the Arya Samaj, Sri Ramakrishna and his great disciple Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Radhakrishnan.

Our historical survey will have to consider also the theological standpoint of the nineteenth and twentieth century missionaries from whom the young Church in India learnt the discipline of systematic theology, and the gradual change in standpoint which came with the turn of the century. The development of higher criticism, the rise of theological liberalism, and the growth of the study of comparative religion all had their influence on the background against which Indian theology has been written. Here we shall find a key figure in J. N. Farquhar round whom, over a period of years, much discussion crystallised. Attacked in his early years by Brahmabandhab for his lack of sympathy with "mythological" Hinduism, and later violently opposed by conservatives for his "Crown of Hinduism" approach, he nevertheless stimulated the earlier writings of such important figures as A. J. Appasamy, P. Chenchiah and V. Chakkarai.

We shall see how the earliest fully Indian and fully Christian effort to give expression to Christian truth in Indian terms was that of the early convert poets like Vedanayaga Sastriar and Krishna Pillai. These were men of innate poetic gifts, who brought with them a whole treasury of theological and devotional vocabulary which they offered to Christ. Their poems and lyrics achieved wide popularity among Christians and did much to fix the vocabulary of the Christian Church at a time when Indian theologians in the more technical sense had not yet arisen. In the later nineteenth century poets of this kind arose in the Christian Church all over India, and their contribution to the development of a truly Indian theological vocabulary has been a significant one.

The central and major section of our study will consist of an account and appraisal of the leading Indian theological writers, with separate chapters devoted to Nehemiah Goreh, Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, Sadhu Sundar Singh, A. J. Appasamy, P. Chenchiah, V. Chakkarai, and P. D. Devanandan. These we shall study against the background of their time, especially in relation to contemporary religious, political and social life, to the theological and apologetic writings of Western authors and missionaries, and to the life of the Indian Church, including especially its evangelistic task, the process of "indigenisation", and the movement towards Christian unity. We shall attempt also to give a brief account of recent developments in Indian Christian theology up to the present day, including the work of some Roman Catholic theologians.

Few Indian theologians have written comprehensive works of "systematic theology", and indeed some, like Chenchiah, have been anxious to avoid all appearance of "system", limiting themselves rather to the discussion of isolated doctrines. Nevertheless, the method which we have deliberately

adopted in the following pages is to present the work of each author, so far as is possible, according to a systematic pattern, where necessary rearranging the available material in order to present a comprehensive and "orderly" scheme. The main divisions under which the material has been arranged are as follows:

1. God and Creation.
2. Man and Sin.
3. The Person of Christ.
4. The Work of Christ.
5. The Holy Spirit.
6. The Trinity.
7. The Bible.
8. The Church and Sacraments.
9. The Christian Life.
10. Eschatology.
11. The Relation of Christianity and Hinduism.

We have not, however, been rigidly limited to this division, which serves as a general guide rather than as a strictly applied pattern. Some of our authors, for example, have said little about the sacraments, and in such a case that division is simply omitted without comment. Again, we have not attempted to adhere to the serial order of the subjects outlined above, but have tried rather to indicate the relative importance which our different authors themselves give to the different subjects. In general, however, we have sought to present the views of our selected theologians on the subjects indicated, and to arrange the material in such a way that a comparison of those views is rendered possible. Our method has been to illustrate each point by selections from the writing of the author under discussion, and to limit our own comments as far as possible, the aim being to allow each author to speak for himself in order that a true and comprehensive picture of Indian Christian theology may emerge.

In the second, and briefer, part of our study we shall examine the nature and prospects of Indian theology, on the basis of the work of the authors outlined in the first part.

First, we shall attempt to bring together, under the divisions already suggested, a number of the more important ideas and lines of approach which have emerged in the course of our study. In particular we shall try to identify those theological conceptions, expressed in Indian terminology, which seem to offer fruitful possibilities for the Indian Church as it faces its task of preaching the Gospel and expounding the faith in a Hindu cultural environment. This section should, then, offer for our consideration a number of Indian theological categories which may, in the Indian Church, serve to express the Christian faith in its Biblical fullness without recourse to Greek-derived terms whose significance is not immediately apparent to the Indian believer or enquirer.

Our final chapter will consist of a brief assessment of Indian Christian theology, and an attempt to estimate its prospects for development in the future. We shall draw attention to the crucial importance of the current "confrontation" of Christianity and Hinduism, comparable to that of Christianity and Hellenism in the early centuries, and the need in that confrontation for Indian theology to shake off its Western captivity, and to be free to develop as the Spirit may guide, and as the needs of the situation may demand.

This will lead us to a consideration of the nature of Indian theological thought, especially in those respects where it appears to differ from the Western approach. We shall look at the question of authority in doctrine, at the different "strands" of theological thought which can be identified, such as those connected with the schools of Sankara and Ramanuja, at the different types of logic which are used in Indian thought, and at the relation of theology to history.

A brief recapitulation of the possibilities of a new Indian theological terminology will be followed by our final attempt to determine the nature of

the relationship between Christianity and Hinduism, especially in view of the rapid process of secularisation which is now going on. Can a "secularised" Hinduism be to India what secularised Hellenism has been to the West - a "neutral" cultural background which gives full freedom to the Christian faith to develop, and provides categories and terms for its statement in a fuller and more significant way than has yet been possible?

Finally, we shall come to the question raised by the title of our study, "The Place of Dogmatic Theology in the Indian Church". We shall consider whether Hinduism does in fact, under cover of a denial of "dogmatism", provide various systematic "structures" which may be of use in Christian theological formulations, and give some attention also to the place of traditional Western formulae in the Indian Church of the future. We shall ask ourselves also whether the Indian Christian theology which we have studied may not, in its passionate concern to witness effectively in its own cultural environment, have something positive and significant to contribute to the Church in other lands.

PART I

A SURVEY OF

INDIAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

CHAPTER II

SYRIAN BEGINNINGS AND THE EXPERIMENT OF DE NOBILI

1. The Theology of the Syrian Church

A most ancient and venerated tradition of the Indian Church says that the Apostle Thomas came to India, landing in Malabar in 52 A.D.⁽¹⁾ The examination of the evidence in connection with the origin of the "St. Thomas Christians" in South India lies beyond the scope of this thesis: it is enough to recall that the Christian Church has been established there from very early times, probably from the third century, and possibly considerably earlier.

Tradition further says that in 345 A.D. a Syrian Christian merchant called Thomas of Cana (Canai Thoma) brought a group of Syrian settlers to Malabar. There is no doubt, also, that Nestorian missionaries and settlers came to South India - and possibly also to the North - at an early date, probably from about the end of the fourth century, during the golden age of the Nestorian Missions in Asia.⁽²⁾ The so-called "Nestorian" church, known also as "The Church of the East" was in fact the Church of Persia, with an origin going back beyond the Nestorian controversy, and its tradition appears to have become the dominant one in South India in the period before the arrival of the Roman Catholics, although there may well have been in addition contacts with the Church of Syria also. The traveller Cosmas Indicopleustes, himself a Nestorian, who visited India about 525 speaks of meeting there a bishop who

(1) C.B. Firth: Introduction to Indian Church History (CSL, Madras, 1961)
L.W. Brown: The Indian Christians of St. Thomas (Cambridge, 1956)
E.M. Philip: The Indian Church of St. Thomas (Nagercoil, 1950)

(2) John Stewart: Nestorian Missionary Enterprise - the Story of a Church on Fire (T. and T. Clark, 1928). The great missionary period of the Nestorian Church lasted from the fifth century until the fourteenth.

had been consecrated in Persia, and it is generally assumed that he must have been a Nestorian, of the Persian Church.⁽¹⁾ The Roman Catholic Nicolo Conti, visiting India in the fifteenth century, reported the existence of one thousand Nestorians in the city of Malepur (Madras) and wrote, "They are scattered all over India as the Jews are among us."⁽²⁾

The arrival of Vasco da Gama at Calicut in 1498 opened a tragic chapter in the history of the St. Thomas Christians. The Franciscans who arrived in 1500 found a Christian Church under the care of four Nestorian bishops, but it was not long till the Roman Church began a determined effort to win over the St. Thomas Christians. They were aided by Pope Leo X's establishment in 1514 of the Padroado, giving the Portuguese rights over the Christians of the East. Among the measures adopted to win the Christians away from their Persian allegiance was a maritime blockade which cut off the supply of bishops from overseas.

We cannot here go into the details of the long struggle, and will mention only a few outstanding events. In 1542 the Jesuit Francis Xavier arrived at Goa, and worked energetically as a missionary till 1552 when he left for China where he died. In 1595 the Archbishop of Goa, Alexio de Menezies, intensified the attack on the Syrian Church to such an extent that at the Synod of Diamper in 1599 all the members of the ancient Churches, with the honourable exception of 30,000 Nestorians, submitted to Rome.⁽³⁾

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- (1) Some Syrian Church historians question the fact that the St. Thomas Church was continuously Nestorian, and think that the Jacobite connection may have begun quite early, e.g. E.M. Philip, op.cit. p.82.
- (2) Stewart op.cit. p.92.
- (3) For a Roman Catholic view of these events, see Cardinal Tisserant: Eastern Christianity in India (Longman's, 1957).

The Syrians chafed under the Roman yoke, however, with its unfamiliar liturgy, doctrines and practices, and in 1653 came the famous "Revolt of the Coonan Cross", when they came out in open revolt and, holding a rope tied to an ancient stone Cross, took a solemn oath to sever all connections with the Roman Church. The Portuguese, however, continued to control the sea routes to Persia.

Then at last in 1665 the long blockade was broken, and there came to Malabar Mar Gregorius of Jerusalem, a bishop of the Syrian Church under the jurisdiction of the See of Antioch. It appears that the St. Thomas Christians had by this time little interest in the allegiance or theology of their bishop, provided he was not Roman. He was in fact a Jacobite,⁽¹⁾ not a Nestorian, but they gladly welcomed him, and the Syrian Church has been Jacobite ever since.

There is no need here to follow the later history of the Syrian Church, for example in its complicated relations with the Church Missionary Society in the nineteenth century, which led to the formation, in 1887, of the reformed Mar Thoma Church. Our purpose has rather been to indicate the variety of early Eastern traditions - in particular the Nestorian and the Jacobite - which have found a home in South India.

It might be expected that the Syrian Church, with its long Indian tradition behind it, would have evolved a distinct type of theology which could be a guide and inspiration to Indian theologians of other, more recent traditions. It must be admitted, however, that this has not been the case,

(1) The name "Jacobite" applied to the so-called "monophysites" of Syria, comes from Jacob Baradai, Bishop of Edessa (d. 578), who organised their Church after the expulsion of Severus, Patriarch of Antioch, by the Emperor Justinian in 518 and his excommunication in 536.

and that it has only been in comparatively recent years, and under the influence of Western theology, that theological writers of note have begun to emerge.⁽¹⁾
A number of reasons may be given for this state of affairs:

The Church existed for centuries in the midst of an alien, Hindu environment, and as a result became somewhat introspective, more or less fitting into the caste-pattern of society as a special caste, but with little, if any, idea of its responsibility for the evangelism of its non-Christian neighbours. In addition, the language of the liturgy was Syriac, which most of the people did not understand. The liturgy was preserved, indeed, and was the centre of the people's Christian life, but such conditions, together with the lack of a vernacular (Malayalam) translation of the Bible until the early nineteenth century, could not make for theological interest or discussion. L. W. Brown writes:

"The Christian faith of the Indian Church has been conveyed from generation to generation through public worship, not through any organised doctrinal instruction, nor even through the Bible."⁽²⁾

Although the Christian community has been culturally closely integrated with Indian society, there has been little or no attempt to work out a theology in Indian terminology which might be used as an instrument of evangelism, for until comparatively recently there was no evangelistic urge. Thus the theology of the Syrian Church - to be found mainly in the liturgy⁽³⁾ and in formularies for ordination and consecration - remained entirely Syrian, couched in the

(1) op. M.V. George (Ed): New Life in an Old Church: A Symposium on the Syrian Orthodox Church of India (Calcutta, 1963).

(2) L. W. Brown: op.cit. p.213.

(3) For a theological discussion of the different Syrian liturgies, see K. N. Daniel: A Critical Study of Primitive Liturgies, especially that of St. James (2nd Edn., Tiruvalla, 1949).

Syrian language, and theologically as far removed from Indian thought as is Western Roman or Protestant theology, despite its age-long sojourn on Indian soil.

We shall leave aside the question of the theology of the Indian Church in Nestorian times, as no records are available,⁽¹⁾ noting merely that there is still a small Nestorian Church in South India, and that India has never ceased to be conscious of the fact of this long Nestorian association. We must turn then, briefly, to a consideration of some of the official theological beliefs of the Syrian Church, as outlined for us by E. M. Philip.

A Pre-Chalcedonian Christology

The Syrian Orthodox Church is frequently called "Jacobite", and "Jacobite" is often equated with "monophysite". And in the history of dogma monophysitism is normally associated with the heresy of Eutyches who was condemned by the Council of Chalcedon in 451. And yet, although the Syrian Church rejects the formula of Chalcedon, it equally rejects and condemns Eutyches. It is clear that the modern Indian Syrian theologian V.C. Samuel has every right to ask, in connection with such leaders of the Syrian Church as Severus of Antioch (d. 538), "Were they Monophysites?"⁽²⁾ And in the Syrian Church's attitude to the Council of Chalcedon we can detect the seeds of the conviction in the minds of many Indian theologians that the Chalcedonian formula is not the only way of expressing a true Christology.

After the Council of Chalcedon, E. M. Philip holds, the Syrians, though they condemned Eutyches, disapproved also of the formula of the Council, as

(1) L.W. Brown, op.cit. p.294.

(2) V.C.Samuel. Art. in IJT. XI/1 (1962)

they felt that the words "acknowledged in two natures" savoured of Nestorianism, and so created a "Quaternity" in place of the Trinity.⁽¹⁾ Their own view, he maintains, was not far different from the Chalcedonian or "Melkite" party.⁽²⁾ True, they did uphold the view of one nature, but

"it was a one-nature formed by the hypostatic union of divinity and humanity, substantially and inseparably preserving the properties of the natures without mixture and without confusion. It must be observed that both the Council of Chalcedon and the Syrian Fathers upheld the same view in respect of the union of natures and the Incarnation. What the Council really condemned was the teaching of Eutyches, in his conception of the character of the union, viz., that in our Lord the natures were so united that one of them absorbed the other."⁽³⁾

Philip refers to the Anglican Bishop Southgate's conclusion that the difference was largely one of terminology, since the Syrians used the word "nature" to signify much the same as the Western "Person". Southgate writes of the Syrians:

"They supposed ... the Latin doctrine ... to be nearly the same with that of the Nestorians, viz., the two natures act separately and independently of each other, as in two individuals They thought that the word person ... as used by the Latins, denoted alone the outward and visible appearance, and that to say merely that the two natures are in one person, meant only that they co-exist under one outward presence."

In contrast,

"the words one nature, with them, imply an inward and real union, by which the one Christ is spoken of as a single individual from whom, as from one, all his words and actions proceed."⁽⁴⁾

A quotation from Mar Philoxinos, Jacobite Bishop of Mabug in the sixth

(1) op.cit. p.368 ff.

(2) i.e. the King's (Emperor's) party.

(3) ibid.

(4) ibid. p.378.

century, makes the Syrian position clear:

"We anathematise and set aside the Council of Chalcedon, because in the one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, it separates the natures and the properties and the actions and the heights and the humiliations and the divinities and the humanities, and thinks of Him as two, and brings in Quaternity, and worships the simple Son of Man."(1)

That there is no suggestion of Eutychianism can be seen from a quotation from the ten oaths taken by episcopal candidates in the Syrian Church, which includes an abjuration of Eutyches and his doctrines:

"He took flesh of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Ghost; Divinity united with Humanity..."

In His Incarnation, His Divinity was not mixed with His Humanity, nor His Humanity with His Divinity; the natures were preserved without mixture and confusion; His Divinity was not separated from His Humanity, nor His Humanity from His Divinity; the union was miraculous, substantial and inseparable; and the Word was made flesh and lived with us....

I believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, is to be acknowledged in one nature, one will, one person, perfect God in Divinity and perfect man in humanity, united in Godhead and manhood."(2)

We may end our discussion with a citation from a nineteenth century Indian Syrian author, E. Philipos:

"The Word of God, one of the Holy Trinity, came down from heaven, and was begotten in the flesh of the Spirit of holiness, and of the blessed Mary, the Virgin, the Mother of God.(3) And He is perfect God and perfect man. And after that the two natures were united in Him...., it cannot be said that they shall be separated or divided for ever.... The Syrians believe that the nature in Christ is one: that the two natures were united with one another; because in Christ the two natures were mingled together - the nature of the Godhead and the nature of the manhood - like wine with water. And whereas it is said that there is one nature in Christ, it is for the confirmation of the unity of the two natures one with another."(4)

The definition of the exact meaning of current Syrian Christology must

(1) quoted by Philip, op.cit. p.374.

(2) ibid. p.372 f.

(3) An explicit rejection of Nestorianism.

(4) E. Philipos: The Syrian Christians of Malabar (Oxford, 1869) quoted by L.W. Brown, op.cit. p.292.

be left to experts in that field. For us it is simply to be noted that there are modern Indian theologians, like E.M. Philip or V.C. Samuel, who feel that the Syrian formulation comes as close to the Biblical truth as does the Chalcedon formula, if not closer. In other words, in Indian theology today even the formula of Chalcedon cannot be accepted as a sine qua non, for there are those who, with a long tradition to support them, question its terminology. It may also be that, in the idea of the "One-natured" Christ, the "new Christ", the "wine mingled with water", there are the seeds of a conception which is found fully developed in Chenchiah's theology of Christ as the "new" factor, "not mere hyphenated God-man", the adi-purusa of the New Creation.

The Indian Syrian tradition calls for much theological explication and scholarship, and today there are many signs that this ancient Church is responding to the challenge. Our references to it in this work will be comparatively few, but it must never be forgotten that its presence is constantly felt, not only in the South, but throughout India, in all the thousands of places where its members, distinguished and humble, are witnessing to their ancient yet ever-burning faith.

2. The Experiment of Roberto de Nobili

We have mentioned the beginning of full-scale missionary work in India by the Roman Catholics in the early sixteenth century, and especially the important work of Francis Xavier from 1543 till 1552. We shall not speak here of him, or of the evangelistic methods used by him and his Portuguese Jesuit companions and followers. The pattern followed was that of close adherence to Roman Christianity as found in the West, accompanied, unfortunately, by the threat or use of the force of the Portuguese crown. The Padroado had given the Christianising of India as one of the aims of the imperial expansion and

so a link was early formed between evangelism and imperialism which was to do a great disservice to the work of the Church in India.

It was to such a Westernised, un-Indian Church that Roberto de Nobili⁽¹⁾ came as a young Jesuit missionary in 1605. He immediately concluded that he could never come close to the people of India by living a European life, and so decided to identify himself with the group which he thought most nearly approximated to his own status as a young Italian nobleman highly trained in theology. He determined to act the role of a Christian sannyasi and adopted the garb and style of living which sannyasis use.⁽²⁾ Nobili managed to find a Brahmin willing at the risk of his life to teach him Sanskrit, and so he became the first European to master the language of the Hindu Scriptures. He writes:

"as he [his Brahmin teacher] is very learned in their religion, we must not let slip this excellent occasion of acquiring a knowledge of it [the Vedas]. No doubt it must be done with close secrecy, considering the great personal danger involved; for if he were discovered they would certainly pluck his eyes out. But since it is very necessary and, under God, the chief means of converting these people, it should not be neglected."⁽³⁾

This was a new idea in missionary work in India, that the study of the Vedas, which had hitherto been a closed book for foreigners, should become "the chief means of converting these people". It is clear that Nobili hoped to master the Vedas, and so to use Indian philosophy and philosophical language as a vehicle for conveying Christian theological truth.

Nobili's attempt at identification with the people of India had certain defects, chief of them being his recognition of caste. He regarded himself decidedly as an apostle to "the twice-born", and neither he nor those converted

(1) Vincent Cronin: A Pearl to India: The Life of Robert de Nobili (London 1959)

(2) He did not consider himself a Brahmin, but as belonging to the Raja caste. Cronin, op.cit. p.55f.

(3) *ibid* p.87.

through his ministry had dealings with low caste converts. Nevertheless, his work in Madurai was numerically very successful, and he must be given full credit for a brave and imaginative experiment fearlessly and logically carried out. His many theological and philosophical disputations with Brahmins were not without their effect. Nevertheless, he did not succeed in creating a new "Indian Theology" despite his hopes.

"Further reading and discussions with Sivadarma [his Brahmin teacher] seem to have convinced Nobili that the Vedas were basically polytheist or pantheist and the Vedanta, as expounded in Madurai, inalterably monist. Now a monist theology leaves no place for the very core of Christianity: the union of the human person with the living God in a love which transforms but does not consume. Nobili's hope that it would be possible to present Vedantism as a philosophy compatible with Christian revelation was proved an illusion. He therefore abandoned his short-lived attempt to base an apologetic directly either on the three Vedas or the Vedanta."⁽¹⁾

Nevertheless, Nobili did make some very interesting literary attempts to present Christian theology in a form which would be intelligible to the Brahmins of Madurai. He had become convinced that if the Church in India were to survive it must have its own clergy, educated as far as possible in Indian traditions. He therefore decided to open a Brahmin seminary, to offer a five year course in Christian philosophy.

"He wanted his future priests to present Christianity to the Indian people in their own languages, not in a jargon in which all religious terms were Portuguese; to be well trained in Christian theology, but also experts in the religion of the Hindus around him; to depend for support and protection on their own countrymen, not on foreigners."⁽²⁾

The money for building the college was delayed, yet Nobili never abandoned his scheme. In his efforts to find a course of study which would be Indian, and yet susceptible of a Christian meaning, his attention was attracted towards

(1) *ibid* p.94

(2) Cronin, *op.cit.* p.168.

the Nyaya System of Logic, whose four pramanas, or means of obtaining reliable knowledge, namely perception, inference by syllogism, inference by analogy, and the authority of the Scriptures⁽¹⁾ seemed to him to have close affinities with Roman scholastic knowledge.⁽²⁾ Nobili determined also to provide Christian literature of scholarly merit in both Tamil and Sanskrit. We are told that he asked permission from Rome to take Sanskrit instead of Latin as the liturgical language for the new Indian Church. It is unlikely that such permission was given, but highly interesting that Nobili should have made the suggestion.⁽³⁾

Nobili himself was not the first pioneer in Christian writing in Indian languages and true Indian style. That honour goes to a remarkable English Jesuit called Thomas Stephens, who had arrived in Coa as a missionary in 1579.⁽⁴⁾ Settling in the peninsula of Salsette, he had learned Konkani and Marathi, and written a Konkani Grammar and Catechism. Realising the hold that the popular vernacular Puranas had on the minds of the people, he composed a Christian Purana, a long poem narrating the stories of the Old and New Testaments, written in colloquial Marathi, with an admixture of Konkani.

With this example before him, Nobili composed "A Life of Our Lady in Sanskrit Verse, canticles for marriages and funerals, and a summary of Christian doctrine in a hundred Sanskrit slokas. Besides these verses for Brahmins, Nobili wrote others in Tamil and Telugu (including a Defence of Religion), which proved very popular."⁽⁵⁾

(1) pratyaksha, anumana, upamana, sruti. For a discussion of the pramanas, v. infra p. 332.

(2) Cronin, op.cit.;. 172.

(3) ibid. p.173.

(4) ibid. p.174.

(5) Cronin, op.cit. p.176.

In addition he wrote a number of Tamil prose works: the Agnana Nivaranam (Dispelling of Ignorance) treating in dialogue form of God and his attributes; and the Gnanopadesam (Spiritual Teaching) containing the substance of his Christian instruction, and growing by the end of his life into five volumes, almost a Summa Theologica for India. (1) He also wrote Attuna Nipunayam (Disquisition on the Soul); Tivviya Madirigai (the Divine Model); Tushana Tikaram (Refutation of Blasphemies); Punar Jenma Acheba (Refutation of Rebirth); and Gnana Sanchivi (Spiritual Medicine). (2)

We shall limit ourselves to this brief mention of de Nobili, as it is our intention to deal primarily with Indian, not missionary theologians. For the same reason we shall only mention in passing one who, coming to India one hundred years after de Nobili, in 1710, attempted to restore de Nobili's work - Fr. Joseph Constantius Beschi, who wrote a famous Tamil epic, Thembavani, in which many Hindu theological conceptions are used as vehicles of Christian teaching. (3) After the work of these missionary pioneers the effort to use the Vedas and Vedanta as a means of conveying and expounding Christian doctrine was not seriously undertaken again until the work of the Christian bhakti poets, and the theological work of Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya towards the close of the nineteenth century.

(1) *ibid.* p.181.

(2) *ibid.*

(3) *op. D. Rajarigam: Theological Content in Tamil Christian Poetical Works, IJT. XI 14 (1962) p.134.*
 Also D. Rajarigam: The History of Tamil Christian Literature, (CLS, Madras, 1958) p.19f. Thembavani is an epic account of the life of Joseph, in which the brief Scriptural account is greatly elaborated from tradition and fancy.

CHAPTER III

PROTESTANT MISSIONS AND RAM MOHAN ROY

The history of Protestant missions in India begins with the landing of the Lutheran missionaries Ziegenbalg and Plutschau at Tranquebar on 9th July, 1706.⁽¹⁾ Previous to this date there had, of course, been many Protestant Christians in India, in the various trading companies, and the companies had their chaplains, but the Tranquebar missionaries were the first to come with the definite purpose of preaching the Gospel to Indians.

Ziegenbalg and his colleagues were scholarly men, and knew that first priority must be given to the translation of the Scriptures. In 1711 Ziegenbalg completed the translation into Tamil of the New Testament,

"which is now everywhere held in India such a treasure as to surpass all other Indian treasures."⁽²⁾

Although the Italian Jesuit Beschi mocked at Ziegenbalg's Tamil,⁽³⁾ there is no doubt that Ziegenbalg, like all the early Protestant missionaries, had his priorities right when he determined that the first necessity was a translation of the Bible. In addition, however, he was unwearied in his researches into Hinduism, and indeed caused some consternation at the Mission's headquarters in Halle by his sympathetic account of Indian religion. In 1710 he wrote:

"I do not reject everything they teach, rather rejoice that for the heathen long ago a small light of the Gospel began to shine ... One will find here and there such teachings and passages in their writings which are not only according to human reason, but also according to God's Word."⁽⁴⁾

(1) E. Arno Lehmann: It began at Tranquebar (CLS 1956)
Erich Beyreuther: Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg (CLS 1955)

(2) Lehmann, op.cit. p.25.

(3) ibid. p.24.

(4) Lehmann, op.cit. p.31f.

A new era in Protestant missionary work in India was inaugurated by William Carey of Serampore, who began work in India in 1793. Carey was a man of varied genius, and his work had many facets - evangelistic preaching, Bible translation, the detailed study of the Hindu Scriptures, teaching and educational work, printing, agriculture and botany. We shall, however, concentrate our attention on two aspects of his work, the problems of Bible translation, with its theological implications; and the controversy on theological questions which he and his colleagues, in particular Joshua Marshman, carried on with the great pioneer of the Indian Renaissance, Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

As we saw with Ziegenbalg, it has usually been the translation of the Scriptures which has made the first claim on a pioneer Protestant missionary's attention, once he has gained a certain fluency in the language of the area to which he has been sent - sometimes even before he has gained much command of the language! This feature of Protestant missionary work has been in strong contrast to Roman Catholic practice, where in India at least the Bible has never until recently been placed without reserve in the hands of the people.⁽¹⁾

The vocabulary of the Bible provides the basic theological terminology in any language. But in India it has never been simple to find clear and readily-understood terms to coincide with Hebrew and Greek words. Practically all the terms which would seem most natural to use have already got a meaning, fixed in relation to Hindu religion or philosophy. Some word must be chosen, however, and in the course of years it becomes familiar to Christian people, for whom it gradually acquires specific Christian overtones. The Christian community becomes familiar with, and ultimately devoted to the language of the most familiar translation, and any efforts to

(1) Roman Catholic charges that Protestant Bible translations have been uncouth and misleading have no doubt had some truth in them. The fact remains that God has greatly used these translations, however imperfect they may be.

revise or modify this vocabulary are strongly resisted. But the words used are by no means so clear and unambiguous to the Hindu who may read the Bible. He may find the language barbarous and uncouth, some of the terms quite unintelligible, and the significance of others may be only too clear to him, but not in the sense intended by the translators.

To take an example, Dr. John Wilson, the famous Scottish missionary who arrived in Bombay in 1829, contributed an article in November 1830 to the Oriental Christian Spectator, which he had himself founded, on "Sanskrit and Marathee Renderings of Theological Terms", in which he argued strongly against the Christian use of the word svarga for heaven, on the grounds that its meaning is limited to the sensual heaven of India. He suggested instead the use of the neutral word devaloka ("The abode of God"). In fact, the word svarga has gained general acceptance, whereas today there is a marked antipathy in Christian theological circles to the use of the word deva for God, as the latter word is often used in the plural in Hinduism, to denote gods and demons. It is still true, however, that the word svarga, when first read in the New Testament by Hindus, may create a quite wrong impression.

Carey and his colleagues set up in Serampore what might almost be described as a "Bible Factory"⁽¹⁾ with separate departments for the different languages. Apart from the basic translations into Bengali, Hindi and Sanskrit, which the missionaries carried out themselves, many of the translations were largely the work of pandits, who worked from some of the versions already made. The result, therefore, often leaves much to be desired. It is, however, an astonishing fact that the Serampore missionaries succeeded in translating the Bible, in whole or in part, into more than thirty languages, and so, for many of the language areas, established the basic vocabulary of Christian theology. It is true that in some areas, such as

(1) See G. Smith: Life of William Carey.

Gujarat, better translations by local missionaries almost immediately superseded the Serampore versions.

With the renewal of the East India Company's Charter in 1813, the conditions governing the admission of missionaries to India, which had hitherto been most stringent, were somewhat relaxed, so that with increasing missionary personnel all over India, the Christian Church began slowly to take root and spread. Through the pioneering efforts of Carey, soon followed by many others, the tiny Christian Church now possessed the Bible in its own language, with a theological vocabulary imperfect indeed, and sometimes positively misleading, and yet providing the basis on which a theological structure could gradually be built.

It should not be imagined, however, that the spread of the Christian Gospel in India was entirely dependent on translations into Indian languages. The end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth saw the start of the spread of English education and Western ideas,⁽¹⁾ in the beginning of what has been called the Indian Renaissance,⁽²⁾ a process in which Christian institutions and Christian individuals, both in Mission and in Company service, played a large part. There thus grew up in India, and at first especially in Bengal, a class of English-educated Indians who were eager to learn whatever new the West had to offer them, in both secular and religious fields. To the efforts of the missionaries, and of evangelically inclined East India Company chaplains like Henry Martyn and Claudius Buchanan, there was at the same time opposed a flood of rationalist literature from an England where the Christian Church itself was torn by the struggle between Arians and Trinitarians. The problems raised by the two opposed streams of Western influence are ones which have never ceased to be acute, though the viewpoints of both Christian and secular literature have gone through many transformations since the time under consideration.

(1) For a good account, see K. Ingham: Reformers in India, 1793-1833, (Cambridge, 1956).

(2) op. C.F. Andrews: The Renaissance in India (London, 1912).
D.S. Sarma: The Renaissance of Hinduism (Benares, 1944).

RAM MOHAN ROY (c. 1772-1833)

Raja⁽¹⁾ Ram Mohan Roy⁽²⁾ may be said to be the first Indian to have written seriously and extensively on Christian theological themes. His is a name which is highly honoured in the history of India, for he was the pioneering Hindu social reformer without whose help and advocacy many reform measures, such as the abolition of Sati in 1829, might have been long delayed. It is not without reason that he is sometimes called "The Father of Modern India". His work merits careful consideration, for many of the theological attitudes which he outlined have become widely accepted in India.

He was a Bengali Brahmin who, finding no satisfaction at home for his religious longings, set off at the age of fifteen and wandered as far as Tibet. His early studies included Persian and Arabic, and he became thoroughly familiar with the faith of Islam, which strongly influenced him in the direction of the unity of God and the meaninglessness of idol-worship. His first book, written in Persian with an Arabic preface, in the period before he became familiar with English and so with Christianity, is entitled "Against the Idolatry of all Religions".⁽³⁾ The turning point in his life came in 1811 when he was an unwilling witness of the sati of his brother's wife. The incident made him vow to devote his life to the overthrow of this and similar abuses. In this work, the two chief sources of his

(1) The title "Raja" was conferred on him by the Mogul Emperor of Delhi on the occasion of his visit to England in 1830, when he pleaded the cause of the Emperor to the East India Company and the British Government.

(2) Manilal C. Parekh: Rajarshi Ram Mohan Roy, Rajkot, 1927.
Nalin C. Ganguly: Raja Ram Mohan Roy (YMCA, Calcutta, 1934)
J.N. Farquhar: Modern Religious Movements in India (Macmillan, 1918) p.30ff.
The Cultural Heritage of India. Vol. II, pp.397ff. (Belur Math, Calcutta).
C.F. Andrews: The Renaissance in India, p.108.
I am indebted also to Dr. F. Muliylil's unpublished Oxford D.Phil. Dissertation, An Examination in the Light of New Testament Doctrines of the Treatment of Christian Theology in Modern Reformed Hinduism, as illustrated by the Brahma Samaj. (1952).

(3) Quoted in "An Appeal to the Christian Public in Defence of the 'Precepts of Jesus'" By a Friend to Truth. Calcutta, 1820, p.4.

inspiration were the Upanisads and Christian morality. His reading of his own Hindu Scriptures further convinced him of the Unity of God, and of the absurdity of idol-worship, while of Christianity he wrote:

"The consequences of long and uninterrupted researches into religious truth has been that I have found the doctrines of Christ more conducive to moral principles and more adapted for the use of rational beings than any other which have come to my knowledge."⁽¹⁾

It was Christian ethics rather than Christian theology which attracted Ram Mohan Roy, and he saw no reason why a compromise should not be possible between his own Hindu monism based on the Upanisads, and the morality of the Sermon on the Mount, which so greatly attracted him. "The problem before the Hindu Reformer was to graft the ethics of Christianity on the stem of Hinduism and make it yield the 'fruits of the Spirit'".⁽²⁾ In a series of pamphlets he openly attacked Hindu polytheism, and Brahmanical religion in general, and tried to rouse his fellow Hindus from "their dream of error" so that they could contemplate "the unity and omnipresence of nature's God."

His study of Christianity led him to publish, in 1820, a book entitled The Precepts of Jesus.⁽³⁾ This is a collection of extracts from the four Gospels covering the greater part of the teaching of Jesus, and was primarily intended to enlist the Hindu intellectual in the cause of the moral reform of Hindu Society. As a rationalist, Ram Mohan Roy was interested in Christian ethics rather than theology, and thought of the teaching of Jesus as "more likely to produce the desirable effect of improving the hearts and minds of men of different persuasions and degrees of understanding".⁽⁴⁾

(1) Quoted in Andrews, op.cit. p.110, and Farquhar, op.cit. p.32.

(2) F. Muliyil, op.cit. p.119.

(3) The Precepts of Jesus: The Guide to Peace and Happiness. Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta, 1820, pp. iv and 82 (published anonymously).

(4) Introduction to The Precepts of Jesus, pp. iii and iv.

It is significant that of the eighty-two pages of extracts in the original edition, only the last four are devoted to the fourth Gospel. The clear teaching of this Gospel on the unity of the Son with the Father did not appeal to Ram Mohan's unitarianism, and it is interesting that he omits John 10:30, "I and my Father are one", a verse which exercises a fascination for most later Hindu students of the New Testament. He defends his neglect of John:

"It is from this source that the most difficult to be comprehended of the dogmas of the Christian religion have been principally drawn". Here "is erected the mysterious doctrine of three Gods in one Godhead, the origin of Mohammedanism, and the stumbling-block to the conversion of the more enlightened among the Hindoos".⁽¹⁾

Some contemporary Christians no doubt saw in this book the beginning of a change for the better in the Hindu attitude towards Christianity. Even in more modern times interpreters like J. N. Farquhar⁽²⁾ have seen in this reform movement "the first halting approach of the Hindu intelligentsia towards the Christian religion".⁽³⁾ But the Serampore missionaries thought otherwise, and in the pages of their journal The Friend of India a controversy with Ram Mohan Roy developed, to which he replied in his Appeals to the Christian Public.⁽⁴⁾

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- (1) First Appeal, p.22. This attitude, caused by his unitarianism, is interesting in view of the fact that most later Indian theologians have felt specially attracted to this Gospel.
- (2) e.g. Modern Religious Movements, p.33.
- (3) Muliyl, op.cit. p.125.
- (4) (a) An Appeal to the Christian Public in Defence of the "Precepts of Jesus" by A Friend to Truth, Calcutta, 1820.
 (b) Second Appeal ... by Ram Mohan Roy, Calcutta, 1821 (Baptist Mission Press)
 (c) Final Appeal, Calcutta, 1824. (The Mission Press refused to print this).
 The controversy began with the missionaries' objection to Ram Mohan Roy's isolation of the moral teaching of Jesus from the full story of his birth, life, death and resurrection. As the discussion developed, Ram Mohan Roy found himself obliged to write fully on such topics as the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, the Atonement, and the Holy Spirit. It is to these controversial booklets that we mainly owe our knowledge of his standpoint.

At this time, Ram Mohan Roy was in touch with Unitarians in England and America, especially with a certain Rev. Henry Ware of Cambridge, Mass.⁽¹⁾ He also succeeded in winning to his side one of the Serampore missionaries, William Adam, with whom in 1821 he formed a "Unitarian Mission" in Calcutta. Indeed, much of his theological writing is reminiscent of that of rationalists and Unitarians in the West at that time, and has little that is specially Indian about it. He rejects "revealed" doctrines such as those of the Trinity and the two natures of Christ, and is interested rather to maintain the position of natural theology. God is for him the Absolute, and so any kind of personal knowledge of Him is ruled out. A letter to Henry Ware makes his general position very clear:

"Nothing can be a more acceptable homage or a better tribute to reason than an attempt to root out the idea that the Omnipresent Deity should be generated in the womb of a female, and live in a state of subjugation for several years, and lastly offer his blood to another person of the Godhead, whose anger could not be appeased except by the sacrifice of a portion of himself in human form. So no service could be more advantageous to mankind than an endeavour to withdraw them from the belief that an imaginary faith, ritual and observances, or outward marks independently of good works can cleanse men from the stain of past sins and secure their eternal salvation."⁽²⁾

The words "independently of good works" show Ram Mohan Roy's concentration on ethics, to the exclusion of anything savouring of dogmatism, ritual or even faith as opposed to works.

The missionary attack in The Friend of India⁽³⁾ concentrated on showing that Christianity is not just a religion of monotheism and morals, but that at its centre lies faith in Jesus Christ as divine, and in his work of atonement. In his first Appeal, in reply to these attacks, Ram Mohan Roy gave his reasons for separating the teaching of Jesus from Christian theology, while in the second and third appeals

(1) Cultural Heritage, Vol. II, p.408.

(2) Quoted Maliyil, op.cit. p.147.

(3) Chiefly led, apparently, by Joshua Marshman. (Parekh, op.cit. p.86).

he carried the argument further, asking whether indeed the characteristic doctrines of Christianity - the Trinity and the Atonement - have scriptural warrant.

"He maintains that the Bible itself was free from all adumbrations of Christian doctrines, and suggests that these perversions belong to the later centuries, when Christianity spread among the Greeks, who imported into the pure religion of Jesus and of the Jews before Him, their former polytheistic ideas of incarnation and theophanies." (1)

In 1815 Ram Mohan had established a society called the Atmiya Sabha ("Friendly Association") for the propagation of his religious views. Weekly meetings were held, at which texts from the Hindu Scriptures were recited and hymns were sung. Then in 1821 the "Unitarian Mission" was formed with William Adam, and Unitarian services in English were held. When these proved unsuccessful, friends suggested a more distinctly Indian service in the vernacular, and a new society was formed for the purpose in 1828, called at first the Brähma Sabhā, and eventually the Brähma Samāj, a society which was destined to play an important part in the reform of Hinduism, first under its founder and later under Keshub Chunder Sen. (2)

The religious services of the early Brahma Samaj included the reading of passages from the Upanisads and the singing of specially composed theistic hymns in Sanskrit and Bengali. The Trust Deed of the Samaj's place of worship, opened in 1830, stipulates that it shall be used

"for the worship and adoration of the Eternal Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe but not under or by any other name designation or title peculiarly used for and applied to any particular Being or Beings by any man or set of men whatever..... and that no sermon preaching discourse prayer or hymn be delivered made or used in such worship but such as have a tendency to the promotion of the contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the Universe to the promotion of charity morality piety benevolence virtue and the strengthening the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds." (3)

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- (1) Maliyil, op.cit. p.166. Ram Mohan Roy is attempting to "demythologise" Hinduism by discarding polytheistic and incarnational "perversions".
- (2) Farquhar, op.cit. p.29ff. Brähma is an adjective derived from Brahman, the Supreme Being of the Vedānta philosophy; it is often used in the early anglicised form Brähmo.
- (3) Farquhar, op.cit. p.35.

From this interesting document we can gain some idea of Ram Mohan's approach - deistic worship, without prayer, of the "Author of the Universe". This worship consists in a contemplation of the attributes of God,

"bearing in mind that the Author and Governor of this visible universe is the Supreme Being, and comparing this idea with the sacred writings and with reason. In this worship it is indispensably necessary to use exertion to subdue the senses, and to read such passages as direct attention to the Supreme Spirit."⁽¹⁾

Ram Mohan Roy sailed for England in 1830, on a visit which brought him great fame and popularity. He hoped to return to India for further service of his people, but died in Bristol in 1833. His name is revered in India as a great patriot and pioneer of reform.

We shall now consider briefly his treatment of four of the fundamental Christian doctrines.

(1) The Person of Christ

His attitude to Christ is one of reverence, as for a great teacher and "messenger" of God, but he denies that the title "Son of God" attributes divinity to Him. He writes:

"The epithet 'Son' found in the passage 'Baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, etc.' ought to be understood and admitted by everyone as expressing the created nature of Christ, though the most highly exalted among all creatures."

It is clear that Ram Mohan Roy is here taking up an Arian position, which is not surprising in view of his Monist background, his Islamic studies, and his association with Western Unitarianism, and that, too, at a time when the Arian controversy was at its height in England, Ireland and elsewhere.⁽²⁾

(1) *ibid.* p.37f.

(2) Ram Mohan Roy had made a careful study of Mosheim's Church History and mentions Arius with approval. Muliyil, p.192.

What, then, is the relation of Jesus to God? Ram Mohan Roy quotes many passages to prove "The Natural Inferiority of the Son to the Father".⁽¹⁾ Jesus, he holds, is delegated with power from God, but does not possess this power intrinsically. God's nature is pure unity, and Jesus is his messenger, who is plainly distinguished from Godhead,⁽²⁾ and entirely subordinate. The unity with the Father implied in certain Johannine texts is merely

"a subsisting concord of will and design, such as existed among His Apostles, and not identity of being."⁽³⁾

He accepts the title "Son of God" - and indeed all the Scriptural titles of Christ - but always in a qualified sense, implying that each one is a special gift conferred by God, rather than his by right. Jesus is

"the 'Son of God', a term synonymous with that of Messiah, the highest of all the Prophets; and his life declares him to have been, as represented in the Scriptures, pure as light, innocent as a lamb, necessary for eternal life as bread for a temporal one, and great as the angels of God, or rather greater than they."⁽⁴⁾

Strangely enough, Ram Mohan Roy does accept the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, though taking care to divorce it from any belief in the personality of the Holy Spirit, as that would, he felt, involve "the Godhead's having had intercourse with a human female". In simple terms he writes:

"The miraculous influence of God came upon Mary, so that, though a virgin, she bore a child."⁽⁵⁾

(1) Second Appeal, p.12

(2) *ibid.* p.22.

(3) *ibid.* p.19. Compare A.J. Appasamy's view of the "moral" nature of the union of the Father and Son, v. *infra* p.

(4) *ibid.* p.69. The qualifications on "Light", "Lamb", "Bread" will be noticed!

(5) *ibid.* p.88.

In line with this, he does not deny the miracles of Christ, even the Resurrection, but insists that they are unimportant, and points out that in India, where so many other miracles are believed, they carry little weight in Christian apologetic.⁽¹⁾

His argument for the rejection of the belief that Christ's nature is divine as well as human is interesting in its revelation of the common Hindu (as well as agnostic) idea that God can have no direct connection with matter:⁽²⁾

"Were anyone to insist that the term 'God', applied to Jesus, should be taken in its literal sense, and that consequently Jesus should be actually considered God in the human shape, he would not only acknowledge the same intimate connection of matter with God, that exists between matter and the human soul, but would also necessarily justify the application of such phrases as 'Mother of God' to the Virgin Mary."⁽³⁾

The implication is that either of these conceptions would be totally unacceptable to those Hindus whom one might hope to convince of the divinity of Christ.

(2) The Work of Christ

The saving work of Christ, Ram Mohan Roy believed, is accomplished through his teaching, and his death is simply the supreme illustration of his precepts:

"Jesus was invested with a divine commission to deliver instructions leading to eternal beatitude, which whosoever should receive should live for ever."⁽⁴⁾

This was the "sole object of his mission",⁽⁵⁾ for, although He may rightly be called "Saviour", or "a distributor (sic) of eternal life", this is purely in his capacity of divine teacher.⁽⁶⁾ He rejects any idea of vicarious suffering, or of a

(1) *ibid.* p.80.

(2) The predominant tendency in Hinduism (with the exception of the samkhya school which posits a dualism of purusa and prakriti) is to deny the full reality of matter, which exists only on the 'practical' (vyavaharika) level. Brahman (the name which Ram Mohan Roy uses for God) can have no connection with this unreal level of existence.

(3) *ibid.* p.110.

(4) *ibid.* p.57.

(5) *ibid.* p.58.

(6) *ibid.* p.65.

sacrificial death, using his arguments simultaneously to attack the doctrine of the two natures. God, for him, is impassible, so that if Jesus suffered in his divine nature, this would be "highly inconsistent with the nature of God", which is "above being rendered liable to death or pain". If, on the other hand, Jesus suffered vicariously in his human nature - the innocent for the guilty - this is in turn inconsistent with the justice of God.⁽¹⁾ He turns to Hebrews 10.5⁽²⁾ for confirmation of his idea

"that the divine disregard for mere sacrifice led to the preparation of a body for Jesus, through which he could impart to mankind the perfection of the will and laws of God".⁽³⁾

Jesus did indeed suffer, innocent as a lamb, that "symbol of innocence subjected to persecution,"⁽⁴⁾ but he considers unscriptural the attempt "to represent human blood, or that of God in human form, as an indispensable atonement for sin."⁽⁵⁾

The plan of salvation is for him a very simple one. "This do, and thou shall live", said Jesus. To follow the Precepts of Jesus is

"the best and only means of obtaining the forgiveness of our sins, the favour of God, and strength to overcome our passions and to keep his commandments."⁽⁶⁾

If we repent, we receive forgiveness, and there is no need for an atoning death, though we are greatly helped by the supreme example of the Cross:

"Jesus, the spiritual Lord and King of Jews and Gentiles, in fulfilment of the duties of his mission, exposed his own life for the benefit of his subjects, purged their sins by his doctrines, and persevered in executing the commands of God even to the undergoing of bodily suffering in the miserable death of the Cross, a self-devotion or sacrifice of which no Jewish high-priest had ever offered an example".⁽⁷⁾ By his death Jesus has "qualified himself to be mankind's intercessor at the heavenly throne, where sincere repentance is to be offered by them instead of perfect duty".⁽⁸⁾

(1) *ibid.* p.61

(2) "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body have thou prepared for me" (AV)

(3) Quoted by Muliylil, P.203

(4) Second Appeal p.68

(5) Muliylil, p.203

(6) First Appeal, p.10

(7) Parekh, *op. cit.* p.88

(8) Muliylil, p.204

If we fail to follow Jesus' teaching - as we shall - the solution lies in repentance,

"the most acceptable atonement on our part to the All-merciful, when we have fallen short of that duty."(1)

This is the nearest that he approaches to a doctrine of repentance, faith, grace and forgiveness.

(3) The Holy Spirit

As a Unitarian, Ram Mohan Roy is unable to accept the Holy Spirit as a Person of the Godhead, or as possessing personality or deity at all, and he devotes a chapter of the Second Appeal to "The Impersonality of the Holy Spirit". The Spirit represents, for him, the holy influence and the power of God, but he denies any "self-existence or distinct personality".(2) The Spirit is that influence of God, from which we may expect direction in the path of righteousness.(3) It is the power of God, through which Mary conceived the child Jesus. But this Spirit is not to be thought of under any particular form:

"If we believe that the Spirit, in the form of a dove, or in any other bodily shape, was really the third person of the Godhead, how can be justly charge with absurdity the Hindoo legends of the divinity having the form of a fish or any other animal?"(4)

(4) The Trinity

Throughout his active life, Ram Mohan Roy regarded "the Trinitarians" as his opponents, though we are told that when he visited England in 1830 and compared the spiritual life of Unitarian and Trinitarian Churches he felt inclined to change his mind somewhat.(5) Much of his life had been devoted to a polemic against Hindu

(1) Second Appeal p.10

(2) *ibid.* p.86

(3) *ibid.* p.86

(4) *ibid.* p.90

(5) Parekh, p.169

polytheism and idolatry, and he felt that to include Christ and the Spirit as "Persons" in the one Godhead was a reversion to something primitive, a yielding to the polytheistic trends of the Greece and Rome of the early centuries as against the clear monotheism of Judaism, of which he had made a careful study. (1)

He regards God, the Father, as the sole object of worship. The Son, however, may in a certain sense be regarded as Mediator, the messenger who explains the will of God, while the Spirit is the holy influence of God which directs us in the way that we should go. He rejects the customary analogies for the Trinity, (soul, will and perception; sun, light, heat), and asserts that those who accept the Christian revelation should

"profess their belief in God as the sole object of worship, and in the Son through whom they, as Christians, should offer divine homage, and also in the holy influence of God, from which they should expect direction in the path of righteousness." (2)

The words "as Christians" are significant, as they imply that Ram Mohan Roy believed that Christ was a worthy channel for Christians to use in their approach to God, but that there might be other channels for those brought up in other traditions.

Before the time of Ram Mohan Roy there had been objectors to the work of the Christian missionaries. But he is the first to raise serious theological objections, and in the process to propose his own version of Christianity, on the basis of a rationalist and monist interpretation of the Biblical evidence. He would have liked to make Christianity into a Unitarianism with strong emphasis on the ethical teaching of Jesus. It is an ideal which has continued to be held by many

(1) He acquired a very good knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, and some of his passages of Biblical exegesis are extremely well-informed and penetrating.

(2) Second Appeal, p.85

until the present day, and which can exercise a strange fascination on Christians too, for William Adam was not the last to be led away into a Hindu interpretation of Christianity.⁽¹⁾ Nevertheless the testimony of C.F. Andrews should not be forgotten, that

"some leading Bengali Christians have acknowledged that they owe the beginnings of their faith in Christ to the study of The Precepts of Jesus".⁽²⁾

In contrast, however, to these Christian contemporaries of Ram Mohan Roy and to those like Farquhar who have written on the Reform Movement, Dr Muliylil sees in the Great Reformer's attitude towards Christianity

"the first unconscious step towards the acceptance in India of the secularist philosophy of the West which in the end denied the relevance of God to the life of man".⁽³⁾

(1) One wonders if this is not indeed what has happened, albeit unwittingly, to the author of Honest to God!

(2) C.F. Andrews, op. cit. P.113

(3) op. cit. p.245. The later developments of Indian secularism are analysed with much insight by P.D. Devanandan. v. infra p. 521 ff.

CHAPTER I V

PROPHET OF THE NEW DISPENSATION: KESHUB CHUNDER SEN (1838-1884)

Ram Mohan Roy, with his wide knowledge of English, was able to go to Western sources - to Locke and the rationalists as well as to the Bible and books of theology. For others less gifted or less fortunate the missionaries at this period, all over India, were writing and printing pamphlets and books expounding Christian doctrine, refuting - often in very polemical fashion - the claims of Hinduism, and adducing the proofs of natural theology as "evidence" of the truth of the Christian religion. For example, we read in the Oriental Christian Spectator in 1830 that the following titles were circulating in the Gujarati language area: On the Perfection of God; On the Creation; On the Fall; All Men are Sinners; On Sin; On Regeneration; On Turning to the Lord; On Sanctification. In 1831 we find a tract entitled The Three Worlds, an exposition of the themes of heaven, hell and human life, in the light of the well-known Hindu concept of Triloka. Another title is Search after Knowledge, or the Evidence of Christianity.⁽¹⁾

These early Gujarati tracts were written systematically, and were designed to cover the major points of Christian doctrine. The same sort of literary production was going on in many areas, and these tracts, along with the preaching of the Word, the distribution of the Scriptures, and occasional set disputations with non-Christians, such as those used by Dr. John Wilson in Bombay⁽²⁾, comprised the "Christian Theological Approach to Hindiusm" of the day. It was in reaction to missionary activity of this sort that Ram Mohan Roy was led to formulate his views on Christian theology.

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- (1) For further details of early Christian literature in the vernacular see D. Rajarigam: The History of Tamil Christian Literature; R.H.S. Boyd: An Outline History of Gujarati Theological Literature IJT XII/2 and 3 (1963)
- (2) G. Smith: Life of John Wilson, pp. 97 ff.
E.G.K. Hewat: Christ in Western India, pp. 77 ff.

At the same time, a different type of missionary approach, and one destined to bear much Christian fruit in its early stages, and to have a widespread, if less obvious, result over many years, was being pioneered by Alexander Duff in Calcutta and John Wilson in Bombay. Shortly after his arrival in Calcutta in 1830⁽¹⁾, Duff determined to develop higher education through the medium of English, thus coming down definitely on the English side in the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy, and anticipating the well-known Macaulay Minute of 1835. It was the hope of Duff and those who thought like him, that secular education in English would prove an effective praeparatio evangelica, by undermining the religious structure of Hinduism in the light of modern knowledge. And indeed, in the early days in Calcutta there were some notable high-caste converts from Hinduism. Soon, in Christian Colleges and High Schools throughout the country Western science, history, literature and philosophy were being taught, along with instruction in the Christian faith. The final product, however, was frequently more like that hoped for by Ram Mohan Roy than by the missionaries: an admiration for the life and teaching of Jesus, but otherwise an attitude of rationalism, and the rejection of dogmatic religion of any kind, even though, as for Ram Mohan Roy himself, the social aspects and obligations of Hinduism, especially of the caste-system, remained unaffected. This atmosphere of spreading education, at first under missionary initiative, but soon under Company, and later Government direction as well, was one of the factors in promoting that "Renaissance" of Hindu India which Ram Mohan Roy, and the Brahma Samaj founded by him, did so much to further. It was an atmosphere in which a definite "encounter" between the Hindu and Christian faiths could take place.

Ram Mohan Roy had in 1828 founded the Brahma Samaj, in order to forward his teaching on the true nature of Hinduism as seen in the Vedas and Upanishads, and to

(1) E.G.K. Hewat: Vision and Achievement, pp.67 ff.
Eric J. Sharpe: Not to Destroy but To Fulfil, pp. 58 ff.

encourage the carrying out of a programme of social reform. It is significant that among all the Hindu words for God he chose to use Brahman, a philosophical name for God as the Absolute, and one which, though not associated with temple-worship, yet belonged to the vocabulary of Hindu religion.

Ram Mohan Roy died in Bristol in 1833, while on a political mission to England, and for some years the Samaj was without a leader of outstanding calibre. Then there emerged Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905), father of the poet Rabindranath Tagore, who became renowned in Bengal as a Maharishi. From the point of view of the dialogue with Christianity, however, the next great leader was Keshub Chunder Sen⁽¹⁾ whose work we must now consider.

Sen was a man of spiritual fervour and brilliant oratorical powers, who joined the Brahma Samaj in 1857 at the age of nineteen. He threw himself with great zeal into the reforming work of the Society, and in 1861 formed a group of young people in Bengal into the Sangat Sabha,⁽²⁾ a society devoted to modern education, social reform and relief work. In particular he worked for the improvement of the lot of women, for widow-remarriage, and for inter-caste marriages. Though not a Brahman, he was ordained as an acarya or minister of the Samaj in 1862.

In 1863 the Rev. Lal Behari Dey⁽³⁾ and others made an attack on the Brahma Samaj in the pages of a Christian weekly, The Indian Reformer, which had been founded partly in order to counteract the activity of the Brahmos.⁽⁴⁾ To this Sen replied in

(1) (Kesavacandra Sena). We use the anglicized version of the Bengali form of his name, which is that used by him and by his biographers Mozoomdar and Parekh. P.C.Mozoomdar: The Life and Teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen. (Calcutta, 1887) Manilal C.Parekh: Brahmarshi Keshub Chunder Sen. (Rajkot, 1926) J.N. Farquhar: Mod. Rel. Movts., pp.41-73. Sen's chief theological publications in English are included in Keshub Chunder Sen's Lectures in India, (The Brahma Samaj, Cassell, London, 1904). (Cited as Lectures)

(2) "Fellowship Association". Sangat implies a religious fellowship.

(3) G. Macpherson: Life of Lal Behari Dey, Edinburgh, 1900. There is a brief account of Dey's attitude to the Brahma Samaj on pp. 55-7.

(4) Mozoomdar, Life, p. 149.

The Brahmo Samaj Vindicated.⁽¹⁾ Nevertheless, his interest in and enthusiasm for the life of Christ was immense, so much so that many missionaries expected that he would soon seek Christian baptism, and regarded him as an influence of the greatest importance on the side of Christianity,⁽²⁾ while many Hindus thought that he had in fact given himself over to Christianity. This impression was no doubt created by his attack on the caste-system (which Ram Mohan Roy had never deserted), and by his manifest interest in the Person of Christ. The result was a secession in the Brahma Samaj in 1866, a conservative group naming itself the Adi Samaj⁽³⁾ separating itself from Sen, whose followers used the name "Brahmo Soma.j of India".⁽⁴⁾

The Brahma Samaj as organized by Sen was very much on the lines of a Christian Church, and indeed, after the passing of the Brahmo Marriage Act in 1872 the Society stepped right outside the pale of Hindu Society.⁽⁵⁾ Sen's thought and practice developed more and more along the lines of his own "inspiration" (adesh), and in fact this inspiration tended more and more to take the place of the principle of rationalism so beloved of Ram Mohan Roy. Gradually also, following his interpretation of Christianity and the light of his own genius, Sen introduced ritualistic practices into the Samaj. This development took place especially after 1878, when there was a second split in the Samaj, as a result of which Sen organized his "Church of the New Dispensation". Ram Mohan Roy had been strongly opposed to any kind of ritualism or anything savouring of sacrifice in the worship of the Samaj, in whose title-deeds he had inserted the following words:

(1) Cult. Heritage II, p.414

(2) Andrews, op. cit. p.115

(3) "Original Samaj"

(4) The spelling Brahmo Soma.j sometimes found is simply a different transliteration of Brahma Samaj, the o representing the Sanskrit inherent vowel.

(5) Cult. Heritage II p.445

"No graven image, sculpture, statue, carving, painting, picture, portrait, or the likeness of anything is to be admitted within the Samaj's premises: no sacrifice, offering, or oblation of any kind or thing is to be ever permitted therein." (1)

Yet Sen in his Church of the New Dispensation developed a system of asceticism, rituals and sacraments, including baptism - he baptized himself in a ceremony consciously imitating the baptism of Christ in Jordan - and communion, in which the elements used were rice and water.

It can be seen from these developments that Sen's outlook tended to become progressively more and more self-centred. (2) He came to see himself, and his fellow "apostles" of the "New Dispensation" as being in a line of succession which stretched through Moses, Christ and Paul (3), and his Church was the third Dispensation, which fulfilled and transcended those of the Old Testament and the New. (4) He died in 1884 at the early age of forty-six.

Stages in Sen's Development

It will be helpful to note some of the more obvious stages in Sen's theological development. His first public pronouncement on the Christian faith was in his annual lecture of 1866, Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia, in which he places Christ "above ordinary humanity," but does not yet ascribe divinity to Him. This lecture resulted in rumours that Sen was on the point of becoming a Christian, and indicates his deep personal attachment to Christ. In a letter of this time to his biographer

(1) Quoted in C.F. Andrews, op. cit. p.113

(2) He does not, however, as Farquhar suggests, "set himself on a level with Christ", (Mod. Relig. Movements p.64). Farquhar, who should have been more careful, makes this allegation, supporting it by quoting a sentence of Keshub's torn from its context, "If Christ was the centre of his Dispensation, am I not the centre of this?" Farquhar does not explain that this is a question which Sen puts in the mouth of his critics, and repudiates. Farquhar's blunder is pointed out by Manilal C. Parekh in Brahmarshi Keshub Chunder Sen, Preface, p.vii f.

(3) op. Muliyil, op. cit. p.272

(4) Muliyil, op. cit. p.310

and disciple P.C. Mozoomdar, he wrote:

"Unless I can live Jesus to some extent at least, I cannot talk Jesus."⁽¹⁾

In the following year he delivered a lecture on Great Men, which, possibly because of public reaction to his previous effort, seems to mark a step back, and to reduce Jesus to the category of a "Great Man". A paragraph on incarnation shows clearly that at this stage he did not regard Jesus as fully God and fully man. He writes:

"True incarnation is not, as popular theology defines it, the absolute perfection of the Divine nature embodied in mortal form; it is not the God of the universe putting on a human body, the Infinite becoming finite in space and time, in intelligence and power. It simply means God manifest in humanity; - not God made man, but God in man".⁽²⁾

Another interesting publication of the same period (1866) is the tract True Faith, which was published as a guide to Brahmo missionaries. It does not explicitly refer to Christ, but shows clearly Sen's conception of faith as personal communion with and commitment to a personal God.⁽³⁾

Hostile reaction to Sen's Christian tendencies seems to have kept him from public pronouncements on the subject for many years, with the exception of his speeches in England in 1870. At the same time a new influence from his Hindu heritage began to exercise a strong fascination on him - the emotional bhakti tradition represented by the medieval Bengali saint Chaitanya, which led him more and more away from the rationalism of the old Brahma Samaj to a warm personal emotionalism, which found expression in religious song and dance. After 1876 this tendency became even more pronounced, and he went over to an emotional pietism, an "intoxication and madness in God"⁽⁴⁾, associated with the idea of Divine

(1) Life, p.179

(2) ibid p.181

(3) v. infra p.56 for a revealing extract

(4) Life p.277

Motherhood, and so connected with the Kali-sakti cult so popular in Bengal. It is probable that in this development is to be seen a consequence of Sen's friendship with Sri Ramakrishna, which began in 1875 or 1876.⁽¹⁾ As a result, Sen begins to reinterpret, in a demythologized or secularized form, the stories of the Puranas:

"He recast and re-interpreted the conceptions of the Vedic and Puranic religion. He dissolved the gods and goddesses of his people in spiritual analysis, and refilled the Hindu pantheon with immortal ideals of wisdom and piety. The popular deities of the land were divested of their idolatrous embodiment, explained in their esoteric meaning, and became sublimated into the poetry and esthetics of reformed Hinduism."⁽²⁾

We can see here the beginning of a process of "secularization" of Hinduism, which was later carried a stage further by Brahmabandhab⁽³⁾, and which is of considerable importance in the development of a workable relationship between the Christian faith and Hindu culture. It is of importance to note that Sen did not attempt to apply this process to Christ, who in a unique way remained at the centre of his thought.⁽⁴⁾

Keshub's faith at this time developed into a form of ecstatic personal communion with God, in which both private prayer and public worship had a vital place. He "laid down as the distinctive feature of his religion a direct and immediate intercourse with the Soul of God"⁽⁵⁾, and prayer/^{became} the source of his "guidance":

"Whatever response he obtained in this way [prayer] was always the guiding principle of his life. This he called by the much disputed name of Adesh (divine command) He walked by the light of this Adesh."⁽⁶⁾

So too the pattern of corporate worship moved away from the old, austere ideal of

(1) Farquhar thinks the year was 1875 (op. cit. p.51): Mozoomdar gives 1876 (Life p.357)

(2) Life p.278

(3) v. infra p. 193.

(4) Writing of Sen's organized "Pilgrimage to the Saints" - "an intensive spiritual effort to realize in consciousness the leading principles of the greatest teachers of mankind" - Mozoomdar notes, "Amongst them, however, none was given the place that belonged to Jesus." Life p.287.

(5) Life p.279

(6) ibid. p.282

the Brahma Samaj, and Sen used freely flowers, music and various rituals, adapted from a variety of sources, Hindu and Christian.

"His great aim was to adopt every feature of the devotional esthetics of orthodox Hinduism, eliminating therefrom only polytheistic errors." (1)

Here too we see an ideal which was later to be influential in Indian Christianity.

It is not necessary here to go into details of the notorious Kuch-Bihar marriage of 1878, when Sen married his under-aged daughter to the young heir of the state of Kuch-Bihar, in contravention of the Brahma Marriage Act which he himself had pioneered. He believed that he was acting under the guidance of his adesh, but he lost many supporters, and so the "Church of the New Dispensation" which emerged in 1879 was virtually a new organization. Of it, Mozoomdar writes:

"In Keshub's ideal of a National Church the religion of Christ composed a very large element, nay more than half the substance." (2)

Eclectic as the New Dispensation was, it outlines the idea of a "national Church", an idea later taken up by people like Brahmabandhab, Kali Chatan Banerji and Dr Palni Andi of Madras. (3)

In Sen's eclectic mind, these "experiments" with Hindu bhakti went hand in hand with "a systematic cultivation of the most profound spirit of Christianity, and persistent efforts were made at sympathy and fellowship with Christians of every denomination". (4) And so he came to his first major utterance on Christianity since 1866, in his lecture of 1879, India asks who is Christ? in which we find a major development, in that he here positively asserts the divinity of Christ. (5) It is in the lectures of his closing years that he works out his theological position most

(1) ibid. p.288

(2) Life p.349

(3) v. infra pp. 394, 635.

(4) Life p.360

(5) v. infra pp. 59 ff.

fully and consistently, and with an astonishing brilliance which shows him grappling with the problem of expressing the Christian faith in Indian thought-forms. In 1881 came We Apostles of the New Dispensation; in 1882, That Marvellous Mystery, the Trinity; and in 1883 his final lecture Asia's Message to Europe. In each we can see Sen grappling with the historic faith, and coming closer and closer to full acceptance of the orthodox creed. He looks towards a "Catholic Church of the Future", in which men of all religions will be united, and does not hesitate to assign to Christ "the position of the 'Human Centre'" - as identified with both humanity and divinity. He writes:

"In blessed God-vision he [Christ] saw his force was God-force, and he also saw himself in all nations, and he saw all the world summed up in himself... Behold the central figure of the Divine Sen. The radii of all human races and nationalities... converge and meet in him. He attracts all to himself, and reconciles all in a common fellowship with himself and his God". (1)

This eschatological view of Christ as the "End" who sums up and unites the truths and insights of all religions is reflected almost a century later in the work of P.D. Devanandan.⁽²⁾ Had Sen, who died at the age of 46, lived longer and come the whole way into orthodox Christianity, a consistent theology of the greatest interest might have emerged. As it is we are left with a series of brilliant insights, but with no consistent structure.

Sen was a controversial figure in his own time. Many Hindus regarded him as a Christian, while most Christians - partly because of his constant criticism of the Church - thought of him as a mere eclectic. Yet despite all the inconsistencies of his thought, he is a key-figure in the development of Indian Christian theology, and his writings deserve to be treated with the greatest respect and seriousness. Here was a man, regarded by many as the greatest Indian of his time, who came more and

(1) Life p.462

(2) v. infra p. 500 ff.



more under the spell of Christ, and responded to Him in his own way.⁽¹⁾ The Western trappings of the organized Christianity of his time alienated him, and yet beyond the externals he could see a vision of Christ Himself, and the story of his life is the story of a pilgrimage with Christ, in the course of which he came gradually closer to orthodox Christianity. Christ became the centre of his life, and the guiding force in all his thinking, yet he steadfastly refused to allow that thinking to be forced into a Western mould. It is an undeniable fact that many, perhaps most, of the conceptions and categories which have become familiar in the writings of later Indian Christian theologians were first stated by Sen, who yet would never acknowledge the name of "Christian", and indeed died with the name of the "Supreme Mother" on his lips.⁽²⁾

He was not a scholar or a systematic thinker like Ram Mohan Roy, but rather a man of deep spiritual intuitions, with a great gift of eloquence and vivid expression. The inconsistency which Farquhar noted⁽³⁾ is to some extent the result of the continual development of his thought, a process which brought him steadily closer to Christian orthodoxy, even though the theological development was sometimes reflected in very heterodox liturgical experiments. We have the testimony of one of his friends, a leading Christian of Bengal, that he died a Christian.⁽⁴⁾

There is something tremendously attractive and touching about Sen. He is

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- (1) His Christian reading included the orthodox Thomas Chalmers and the Unitarian Theodore Parker (Mozoomdar, Life, p.102), and also Dean Stanley, Robertson's Sermons, Liddon's Divinity of our Lord, Seeley's Ecce Homo, and the Theologia Germanica. (Farquhar, op. cit. p.45). On his English visit in 1870 he had especially close relations with Dean Stanley, the Unitarian James Martineau, and Prof. Max Müller. (Mozoomdar, Life, p.216)
- (2) Farekh p.222
- (3) Farquhar op. cit. p.63
- (4) Kali Charan Banerji. v. Farquhar, op. cit. p.67. Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya who was Banerji's nephew, believed that if Sen had lived a few years longer, he would have joined the Roman Church (Farekh, p.238). This is unlikely in view of Sen's strong antipathy to Rome, but it shows that he was moving in the direction of theological orthodoxy, and of sympathy for the organized Church.

the pattern of the Hindu seeker, of one who has found the pearl of great price, but is perhaps reluctant to sell all that he has in order to buy it. There is no denying the reality of his experience of Christ, and the genuineness of his effort to express his experience and his knowledge in terms of his own well-loved Indian tradition. He saw himself as fulfilling a function like that of the Greek Fathers, especially Clement and Origen, and, unlike the rationalist Ram Mohan Roy, turned naturally to the Fourth Gospel and the Logos-Christology. For an understanding of the way in which Indian Christian Theology has sought to interpret its task it is essential to be familiar with the work of Keshub Chunder Sen.

1. The Doctrines of God, Creation and Revelation

(a) God

In considering Sen's theology it is best to start with a rather wide range of the spectrum. Christ was the centre of his own religious experience, and yet he set out from the position of the old Brahma Samaj, for which God is Brahman, and ultimately reached a position with a fully worked out doctrine of the Trinity. His interpretation of the Biblical evidence shows clear traces of the Hindu categories in which he had been brought up, and yet there is a genuine effort to be faithful to the Bible, and to his own profound personal experience of Christ.

Sen's spiritual pilgrimage began from the Brahma Samaj, whose God was Brahman, the undifferentiated Absolute, and from time to time he retains the title Brahman.⁽¹⁾

(1) A Note on the Meaning of Brahman. The etymology of the word Brahman is uncertain. In the Rig-Veda brahman seems to have meant first "hymn, prayer, sacred knowledge, magic formula" (Hume; 13 Principal Upanishads, p.14). The root here would be brh, "to swell, grow", according to Haug: "sacred prayers cause the growth, and thus it came to mean the force of nature, and later the supreme reality". (Radhakrishnan: Ind. Phil. I, p.163). Max Muller traces it to "word", as in the name Brhaspati or Vacaspati, "lord of speech"; thus "that which utters is Brahman" (ibid. p.164, quoting M.Muller, Six Systems pp.52,70.) R.E.Hume points out that the word also implies the power that was inherent in the hymns, and comments:

"This latter meaning it was that induced the application of the word to the world-ground - a power that created and pervaded and upheld the totality of the universe." (op. cit. p.15)

Radhakrishnan feels that the etymology is of no great importance. "To us, it is /clear

But, just as the advaitins had never hesitated to describe even Brahman as sat, cit, anada, so for Sen God is always Triune, and he very early moves away from Ram Mohan Roy's Unitarianism. His own personal experience of God, he claims, is of the Trinity: "I have seen and felt God in his triune nature".⁽¹⁾

(b) Creation

He gives a striking picture of the Creation, indicating his view of the relation of the Father to the Son, who is the Logos, the Agent of Creation:

"Here the Supreme Brahma of the Veda and the Vedanta dwells hid in himself. Here sleeps mighty Jehovah, with might yet unmanifested...⁽²⁾ But anon the scene changes. Lo! a voice is heard ... Yes, it was the Word that created the universe. They call it Logos ... What was creation but the wisdom of God going out of its secret chambers and taking a visible shape, His potential energy asserting itself in unending activities?"⁽³⁾

With the act of creation there commences an ongoing process of creative evolution, whose agent is still the Logos, a process which continues to the present, and stretches on to the future:

"Creation means not a single act, but a continued process ... It is nothing but a continued evolution of creative force, a ceaseless emanation of power and wisdom from the Divine Mind ... The Hindu, too, like the Christian, believes in the continued evolution of the Logos, and its graduated development through ever-advancing stages of life."⁽⁴⁾

clear, Brahman means reality, which grows, breathes, or swells." (loc.cit.)

On the distinct - and confusing - meanings of the words Brahman, Brahmā, Brāhma, Brāhman, see Glossary

(1) Lectures II, p.10. Lecture on That Marvellous Mystery - the Trinity. (1882)

(2) Compare Rig-Veda 10.129. 1,2:

There was then neither being nor non-being ...
Without breath breathed by its own power That One.

Also Chand. Up. 6.2:

In the beginning this world was Being, one only, without a second
It bethought itself: "Would that I were many! Let me procreate
/myself!"

Quoted in R.E. Hume: Thirteen Principal Upanishads, pp. 12,13.

(3) Lectures II, p.11.

(4) Lectures II, p.12.

This evolution, which begins with the Logos, continues through and beyond the evolution of man, but is not exhausted with the emergence of man, for at the end of the process stands the Logos: (1)

"In the evolution of man ... creation is not exhausted Through culture and education he rises in the scale of humanity till he becomes the son of God." (2) "The New Testament commenced with the birth of the Son of God. The Logos was the beginning of creation, and its perfection too was the Logos, - the culmination of humanity is the Divine Son. We have arrived at the last link in the series of created organisms. The last expression of creation, so far as we have been able to trace it, is Sonship. The last manifestation of Divinity is Divine humanity." (3)

And yet the process is not complete, for all men are called to rise to the stature of sonship:

"Having exhibited itself in endless varieties of progressive existence, the primary creative force at last took the form of the Son in Christ Jesus. But is the process of evolution really over? ... If sonship there was, it was bound to develop itself not in one solitary individual but in all humanity. Surely universal redemption is the purpose of creation." (4)

The Christocentricity of Sen's thought is clear in this account of the purpose and process of creation, and indeed he always thinks of God as the Triune God who is to be approached through Christ. Though he sometimes uses the term Brahman he rebukes the tendency among "Theists" (by whom he probably understands chiefly the members of the Brahma Samaj and their Unitarian friends) to regard God as impersonal, and offers his own experience as evidence to the contrary:

"How few among professing Theists realize Divinity in their own hearts! God is not only a Person, but also a character. As a Person we must worship him; His Divine character we must assimilate to our own character." (5)

(1) There is a close similarity here to the thought of such later writers as P. Chenchiah, Teilhard de Chardin and R.C.Zachner. Sen's lecture was delivered in 1882.

(2) *ibid.* p.13

(3) *ibid.* p.14

(4) *ibid.* p.14

(5) *ibid.* p.471. Lecture We Apostles of the New Dispensation, 1881

(c) Revelation

The fact that God is personal carries with it the corollary that He is revealed directly, so that natural theology takes a very subordinate place to immediate revelation. Sen writes:

"We need not have recourse to metaphysics and theology for our knowledge of God. Nay we may well afford to dispense with tame and cold dogmas.

In the presence of the burning reality of a divine communication when God Himself says to us "I am", what better proof do we need of His existence and nature? Surely arguments based upon marks of design and evidences of skill in the universe are old and obsolete; they do not and cannot satisfy the mind of any true believer now. Enough if the Lord says "I am". The Word of God proves God ... I have seen the Lord and heard Him, and therefore believe ... The eye and the ear are my witnesses; I mean the eye and the ear of the soul. Our ideas of Divinity are not abstract and intellectual, but are based upon direct and intuitive knowledge ... We see Him as a present reality, a living Person, with the mind's eye and therefore believe in Him". (1)

The same point is expressed in his much earlier tract True Faith, written in 1866 - in Biblical cadences - for the Brahmo missionaries:

"Faith is direct vision; it beholdeth God, and it beholdeth immortality. It relieth upon no evidence but the eye-sight, and will have no mediation. It neither borroweth an idea of God, from metaphysics, nor a narrative of God from history. The God of faith is the supreme I AM. In time He is always now, in space always here Faith holds a living and loving communion with Him who is dearer than life. It establisheth a personal relation ... The vividness of perception is equal to the warmth of the heart, for in faith, knowledge and love, belief and trust are one." (2)

Sen is thus fully conscious of the righteousness, the moral activity of God, and he is prepared to predicate this of "God", rather than simply of Christ. His frequent identification of the justice loving Jehovah of the Old Testament with Brahman confirms this.

2. Man and Sin

Sen regards man as evolving towards the stature of Sonship - the stature of Christ. He does not say very much on the specific question of sin - few Indian

(1) Life p.365. Quoted from Lecture, Behold the Light of Heaven in India

(2) Quoted in Life p.184

theologians do - but in several passages he makes very clear confession of his own sin⁽¹⁾, and in speaking of the atonement he applies it to "the most polluted of all ages"⁽²⁾. It is clear that he does not share Vivekananda's views of the natural sinlessness of man. The luridness of some of his descriptions of the behaviour of Christian Europeans in India leaves us in no doubt as to his conviction that men are normally sinners, and responsible for their own actions! ⁽³⁾

A passage in Mozoomdar's Life may be assumed to reflect the view on sin of his acarya Sen, with whom he lived in closest contact. Mozoomdar writes:

"Sin thus resolves itself into the weakness of the will. And as all weakness is negative, signifying the absence of strength, sin loses all essential entity, and like darkness means the intense negation of the light of the soul. But though perfectly negative in its essence, it assumes a very positive form when suffered to obscure and mislead the mental powers. Hence it will appear that the will is the real seat of sin."⁽⁴⁾

Sin therefore means the proneness of the will to do anything that is against the will of God. And salvation is entire oneness with the spirit and will of God. Salvation is thus never an act, but a process. It always tends to be complete, but is never so in this earthly life."⁽⁵⁾

The emphasis on the negative aspect of sin - as negation of goodness - is typical of many Indian theologians. Yet the view here expressed goes farther than that, and in the use of the word "proneness" we can see some appreciation of the conception of sin as an active, powerful force for evil.

3. The Person of Christ

(a) Pre-existent Logos:

As we have seen, Sen believed that Christ as the Logos was present as the Agent of Creation. He also stresses his pre-existence:

(1) e.g. Lectures, I, p.332. Lecture Am I an inspired Prophet? 1879

(2) Lectures, II p.91

(3) See e.g. his lecture, Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia, 1866

(4) Life p.389

(5) *ibid* p.390

"His disembodied spirit he saw resting in God's bosom long before its earthly existence. He dwelt with his Father and in Him before he came to dwell here. And to that dwelling-place he felt he would return after finishing his earthly career ... He saw himself abiding eternally in God, before creation and after death". (1)

Sen rejects the Arian idea that there was a time when there was no Logos:

"His earthly life had certainly a beginning, but the divine life in him could not possibly have had a beginning ... truth cannot commence to exist." (2)

Then in an attempt to unravel the mode of Christ's existence before the incarnation he describes this existence as

"an Idea, as a plan of life, as a predetermined disposition yet to be realised ... as light not yet manifested." (3)

"In fact, Christ was nothing but a manifestation on earth, in human form, of certain ideas and sentiments which lay before in the Godhead ... Before the world was, the Eternal God existed, and in his bosom slept Jesus, or rather the Ideal Jesus ... In the fulness of time he was evolved out of that seed." (4)

The Logos, then, who in eternity lay as it were asleep in God, is the Word of Creation, cit (Intelligence, wisdom) ever at work in the development of the created world, and in the fulness of time being born as man in Jesus of Nazareth:

"The Spirit-Christ spread forth in the universe as an emanation from the Divine Reason, and you can see him with the eyes of faith underlying the endless varieties of truth and goodness in ancient and modern times. He is the Chit-Christ, pure intelligence, the Word of God, mighty Logos". (5)

(1) Lectures, I, p.374-5. India asks, Who is Christ? 1879

(2) *ibid.* p.375

(3) *ibid.* p.375

(4) *ibid.* p.376 *op.* Rig-Veda 10.129:

"Darkness there was, in the beginning all this was a sea without light; the germ that lay covered by the husk, that One was born by the power of heat (tapas).

Love overcame it in the beginning, which was the seed springing from mind."

Quoted in Radhakrishnan; Indian Philosophy, Vol. I, p.101

(5) Lectures, II, p.33. That Marvellous Mystery - The Trinity, 1882

Christ, as Logos, is universal:

"As the Lord⁽¹⁾ spoke, the Logos or reason came forth, and was lodged in creation, not in human beings alone, but even in animals. Wherever there is intelligence, in all stages of life, where there is the least spark of instinct, there dwells Christ, if Christ is Logos." ⁽²⁾

(b) "Divine Humanity":

Christ is, then, the pre-existent, eternal Logos. What is his relation to Humanity? In the first of his famous series of public lectures, Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia, delivered in 1866, Sen has a good deal to say about the humanity of Jesus. He calls him "the son of a humble carpenter", and speaks of his growth as definitely human rather than divine:

"By the force of his innate greatness he grew in wisdom, faith and piety by meditation and prayer, and with the inspiration of the Divine Spirit working within him ... He was above ordinary humanity." He had "almost superhuman wisdom and energy". ⁽³⁾

In another passage Sen uses the words "Christ was a man"⁽⁴⁾ but this humanity is immediately qualified by the adjective "Divine". So "Divine Humanity" becomes the category which for Sen best describes the nature of Christ. India, he felt, was prepared to accept Christ as a good man and a great moral teacher, but his divinity was a stumbling-block. ⁽⁵⁾

(c) Kenosis:

In a remarkable passage which foreshadows many theological developments of the next 90 years, he expounds the nature of Christ's divinity in a form of the kenotic theory, taking as his starting point that locus classicus of Indian Christian theologians, "I and my Father are one", a text which he regards as the

(1) For Sen "The Lord" always implies God the Father.

(2) *ibid.* p.32. The view of Teilhard de Chardin is not dissimilar. So also R.C. Zaehner, The Convergent Spirit, though he tends to speak of the Spirit rather than the Logos as the force behind evolutionary development.

(3) Lectures I, p.8

(4) Lectures II, p.25

(5) Lectures I, p.366, India asks: Who is Christ? (1879)

"corner-stone" of Jesus' thought about Himself. (1)

"When I come to analyze this doctrine, I find in it nothing but the philosophical principle underlying the popular doctrine of self-abnegation ... Christ ignored and denied his self altogether ... He destroyed self. And as self ebbed away, Heaven came pouring into the soul. For ... nature abhors a vacuum, and hence as soon as the soul is emptied of self, Divinity fills the void. So it was with Christ. The Spirit of the Lord filled him, and everything was thus divine within him". (2)

In order to preserve his emphasis on the continued true humanity of Christ, which he may have felt was imperilled by this kenotic theory, Sen uses another illustration, which tends almost in the opposite or Adoptionist direction. Emphasizing the distinction between a God-man, which Christ is, and a man-God, which he is not, he writes,

"here man remains man, and God is only superadded to his nature ... Humanity continues to be humanity, but divinity is engrafted upon humanity." (3)

(d) Transparency:

Jesus, then, by his utter abandonment of self, by his kenosis, by living only as "the Man for others" (4), becomes filled with God. Sen goes on to use another concept which has recently become popular once more - that of "transparency".

Jesus

"manifested this divine life in man as no other man had ever done before. There is Christ before us as a transparent crystal reservoir in which are the waters of divine life. There is no opaque self to obstruct our vision. The medium is transparent, and we clearly see through Christ the God of truth and holiness dwelling in him". (5)

(1) *ibid.* p.369

(2) *ibid.* The similarity to J.A.T. Robinson may be noted: "It is in this ultimate surrender of self, in love to 'the uttermost', that Jesus is so completely united to the Ground of his being that he can say, 'I and the Father are one'". Honest to God, p.74. Sen wrote in 1879!

(3) Lectures II, pp. 18, 19

(4) Robinson's phrase, adapted by him from Bonhöffer. Robinson, *op. cit.* p.76

(5) Lectures I, p.373. *op. cit.* p.73: "Jesus reveals God by being utterly transparent to him, precisely as he is nothing 'in himself'". In both cases the similarity to the Christology of Apollinaris will be observed.

It is in this sense, Sen believes, that Christ uses the words, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father".

(e) Subordination:

Sen repeatedly stresses the fact that the Son is subordinate to the Father, and one feels that behind his many arguments is the fear of the statement "Christ is God", which for him would make the Son metaphysically identical with the Father, with Jehovah, with Brahman. Jesus, he writes, "never aspired to be equal to the Father, for he only occupied the subordinate position of the son."⁽¹⁾ His union with the Father is not a "material" or metaphysical one, but rather one of deep communion. Jesus

"was not a materialist, but a true idealist. He saw his own spirit, and he saw the Divine Spirit also, and in deep communion he found the two identified" ... "He dived deep into the Supreme Spirit, and there he lay immersed." ⁽²⁾

(f) Unio Mystica:

It will be seen that he thinks of the union of the Father and the Son rather as a unio mystica than a unio hypostatica, and indeed he goes on to compare this relationship to that of the believer with Christ, thus blazing a trail which was to be followed by many Indian Christian theologians. Jesus sought to extend to others that spiritual oneness which he had with the Father:

"As Thou Father art in me, that they also may be one in us". Thus in comprehensive unity he sought to include God, his own self, and all mankind." ⁽³⁾

Sen thus feels - and here he sets a trend for his successors - that "Christ's fundamental theology" can be summed up in two phrases "I in my Father" and "You in me". It is no accident that these phrases are the New Testament's closest approximation to some of the mahavakyas of the Vedanta - tat tvam asi ("Thou art that") and aham Brahma asmi ("I am Brahman"). Here we can see a pioneer Indian

(1) *ibid.* p.380

(2) *ibid.* p.381 v.*supra* p.58 and note *ad loc.*

(3) *ibid.* p.382

theologian wrestling to express the meaning of Christ's dual relationship to God and to man in terms which will be intelligible to his Hindu friends.

In his last great lecture, Asia's Message to Europe, delivered in 1883 not very long before his death, Sen approaches even closer to Western "orthodoxy". Speaking to Western Christians he says, "I do believe as you do that the Son and the Father are one". But he goes on to say that Western Christians, in stressing Christ's unity with the Father have often neglected his unity with man:

"Surely in the identity of his nature with that of the Supreme God all Christian nations in the West have established their firm faith. But they have only accepted one half of Christ ... If Christ is one with Divinity, he is also one with humanity." There is a "double harmony of his nature, harmony with God or communion, and harmony with man or community".⁽¹⁾

(g) Incarnation and Avatara:

Sen is frequently at pains to point out that in using the term "incarnation" of Christ we must make it quite clear that it is the Son and not the Father who becomes incarnate.⁽²⁾ Bringing the early Church's condemnation of Patripassianism to his aid he is firm in his rejection of the unqualified equation of Christ with God, and would no doubt have objected to such an expression as "God-Incarnate".⁽³⁾ "Thus was the Son incarnated, and not the Father"⁽⁴⁾, he writes, and again, "Not the Father was made flesh, but the 'Word'"⁽⁵⁾

"There was no further need of the Father revealing the Father. What was needed was a new revelation, a revelation of the Son by the Father."⁽⁶⁾ But if you say Christ is your God and Creator ... there is no Son in your theology ... Away with this phantom, this forged 'Second God'".⁽⁷⁾

(1) Lectures II, P.87

(2) Compare Chakkarai's exposition of this point, v. infra pp.415 ff.

(3) How would he have regarded the condition of membership of the WCC? For him the English words "God" and "Lord" normally refer to the first Person of the Trinity.

(4) Lectures I, p.378

(5) *ibid.* p.379

(6) Vol. II, p.23

(7) *ibid.* p.24

Jesus of Nazareth, as incarnate Son, shares in humanity, shares in creation, and yet the divinity of the humanity remains:

"Thus it is that Christ existed in God before he was created. There is an uncreated Christ, as also the created Christ, the idea of the Son and the incarnate Son drawing all his vitality and inspiration from the Father. This is the true doctrine of incarnation."⁽¹⁾

There is a most important point at issue here. Hinduism finds it well-nigh impossible to bridge the gap between God, (Brahman, the unqualified Absolute) and the created world, including man. Recourse usually has to be made to the doctrine of maya, and the created world has reality only in the realm of maya or illusion. This may at times be combined with a belief in Isvara, the personal God and demiurge, who is definitely inferior to the Supreme Brahman.⁽²⁾ Sen here shows his conviction that it is Christ who alone can bridge the gap, so acting as Mediator between God and man, and this fact gives point to his insistence that Christ's unity or "community" with men should not be neglected. To explain Christ's mediation he uses the categories of "uncreated" and "created". It is the eternal Son, the eternal Logos, the uncreated one, who in the womb of the Virgin Mary takes her flesh, and so is "created", and finally effectively bridges the gap between God and man and God and the whole "intelligent" world.

It is interesting to find that Sen is vehemently opposed to the custom of calling Jesus an "avatara".⁽³⁾ In the Vaishnavite tradition the various avatars of Vishnu are really docetic, and cannot be true mediators. Coming simply as successive theophanies of God, they are unable truly to bridge the gap between God and man. "The lie of Christian avatarism", as Sen sternly calls it,⁽⁴⁾ leads only in the direction of idolatry.

(1) *ibid.* p.379

(2) See the illuminating treatment in Panikkar, The Unknown Christ in Hinduism p.119 ff.

(3) Contrast the view of V. Chakkarai. v. *infra* pp.419 ff.

(4) Lectures II, p.38.

"Tell our people distinctly", he says, "that Christ is not an incarnation like the myriad deities worshipped in this land." (1) "He who ... preaches Christ as God the Father in human shape, preaches not Christ but anti-Christ". (2)

(h) Anhypostasia:

What does Sen say, then, of the personality of Christ, the God-man, the Logos? How does he explain the union in him of the divine and the human? We have already seen his meaningful use of the concepts of kenosis and transparency. But he goes deeper.

"You are no doubt aware that this mysterious man had no distinct individuality ... Whatever distinguishes and demarcates human individuality was clearly lacking in his case. He had no home to dwell in ... yet he had a home in the Lord ... But he had not this one thing; he had not this self, which is in us all, the prolific source of all temptations and evils." (3)

He had so emptied himself of "self", had become, in his obedience, so "transparent" to the divine, that men could see the divine, rather than a separate human personality or individuality in him.

"Those who saw him were reminded that it was not his life, for he had no self, but the divine life in him that they saw." (4)

So it is that Sen, although he had on one occasion spoken of Christ as "a man" (5) goes on to say that he was rather "man":

"But he was man, he was humanity. He lived and suffered and died for others." (6)

Sen is here wrestling with the problem faced in post-Chalcedonian times by Leontius of Byzantium and John of Damascus, whose aim it was to defend the Chalcedonian Christology against the charge of Apollinarianism on the one hand and Monophysitism on the other. Leontius regarded the human nature (*φύσις*) of

(1) *ibid.* p.37

(2) *ibid.* p.39

(3) Lectures, I, p.372

(4) *ibid.* p.373

(5) *v. supra* p.59.

(6) *ibid.* p.477

Christ as neither an ὑπόστασις itself, nor yet as without an ὑπόστασις (ἀνυπόστατος) but rather as ἐνυπόστατος, i.e. having its subsistence or ὑπόστασις in the Logos. In Relton's words:

"The human nature of Christ was not without hypostasis, but became hypostatic in the Person of the Logos. It was not an hypostasis because it never existed καθ' ἑαυτήν, but it was ὑποστήναι ἐν τῷ λόγῳ." (1)

Relton concludes that "the doctrine of the impersonality of Christ's manhood is an inevitable deduction from the Chalcedonian Definition", (2) and it would seem that Sen is trying to say something like this in asserting that Christ has "no distinct individuality", "no self", the implication being that Christ is anhypostatic as far as human individuality is concerned, but that enhypostasia in the Logos takes place, so that his human nature finds its hypostasis there. On the other hand there is a tendency among Hindu thinkers to use the word "self" to mean "selfishness" (ahankara) rather than "the self" (atma), so that Sen's view might in fact be closer to J.A.T. Robinson's interpretation of kenosis: Christ empties himself of "self", i.e. of selfishness, and so "Divinity fills the void", in somewhat the same way as, in Apollinaris' view, the Logos takes the place of the human πνεῦμα. Sen obviously appreciates the Christological problem, though his solution is not altogether clear.

(i) The Resurrection:

Sen accepts the Resurrection of Christ, but there are indications that he has doubts about its basis in physical fact, even though he accepts it as implying not only that Christ is alive today, but that his humanity still continues.

(1) H.M. Relton: A Study in Christology, (London, 1917) pp.70 ff.

(2) *ibid.* p.88

"As Leaven he lives today. He is not dead The spirit of God has marvellously rolled away the stone, and Christ is not there." (1) "Where, then is Christ now? He is living in all Christian lives." (2)

It is not only in human lives that he is still alive, however, for, while still retaining his humanity he lives also with God, and is not - like a Hindu avatara - reabsorbed into the Deity:

"The doctrine of bodily resurrection ... however untenable on scientific grounds, suggests ... the continuity of Christ's humanity ... He is still with his God as his human son." (3)

(j) The Oriental Christ:

The title of a book written by one of Sen's close friends and followers, P.C. Mozoondar, is significant. It is "The Oriental Christ", (4) and emphasizes the fact, to which Sen so often draws attention, that Jesus is essentially Asian, not European. For most of Sen's Indian contemporaries, Christianity was a religion of the West, associated with European imperial power. Sen never tires of pointing out that Christianity, and all the main religions of the world, are oriental in origin, and that in many ways it is easier for an Asian than a European to understand the life and teaching and character of Jesus. "And was not Christ an Asiatic?" he asks. (5)

"Jesus is our Jesus", he says, and shows a "genuine orientalism in all His habits and manners." (6)

The West has tended to reduce Christianity to a series of dogmatic formulations, while the East realizes that what is needed is a living encounter with the Living Christ. In the West:

(1) Lectures I p.384

(2) ibid. p.385. cp. P.C. Mozoondar: "If Jesus has risen to them (sc. the disciples and the women), much more hath he risen to us. "Flesh and blood", says Paul, "cannot inherit the Kingdom of heaven." But doth not the spirit rise to the Spirit? Flesh and blood are not more real than the spirit The spirit of Jesus hath risen, and reigneth." The Oriental Christ, p.191

(3) Lectures II, p.19

(4) P.C. Mozoondar: The Oriental Christ. Boston, 1898

(5) Lectures I p.33

(6) ibid. p.365

"we find apostolical Christianity almost gone; there we find the life of Christ formulated into lifeless dogmas and antiquated symbols".⁽¹⁾ "Go to the rising sun in the East, not to the setting sun in the West if you wish to see Christ in the plenitude of his glory, and in the fulness and freshness of his divine life".⁽²⁾

Many Christians who have lived in the East will echo these words, and will recall passages in the works of Western theologians and New Testament commentators which show misunderstandings of the person and work of Christ based upon inadequate knowledge of life in Asia.⁽³⁾ Sen's point here is a valid one, which has been taken up by many later Indian theologians. He claims Christ for Asia rather than for India,⁽⁴⁾ and sees the guarantee of his humanity in his "Asian-ness", even his Jewishness. When speaking of Jesus' Mother, he writes in an illuminating phrase, "how Mary-like was Jesus!"⁽⁵⁾ Jesus too, like his Mother, is of the East.

4. The Work of Christ

Sen's writings on the saving work of Christ show a considerable development of thought, moving always in the direction of fuller Christian orthodoxy. Beginning from his special interpretation of the kenotic theory - that Christ by self-forgetfulness and self-denial emptied himself of "self" to the point where "divinity filled the void" - he stresses the force of Christ's moral example and influence, yet in his later lectures he has quite a lot to say specifically about such topics as atonement, sacrifice, and the Cross. We shall attempt to give a composite picture of his teaching.

(a) "The Journeying God"

In a phrase strangely reminiscent of Barth, Sen speaks of Christ as "The

(1) *ibid.* p.365

(2) *ibid.* p.364

(3) Even more obvious examples are found in some spectacular Biblical films which portray a Christ whom Asians find difficult to understand or even admire.

(4) It is doubtful if he would have approved of the attempts of artists like A.D. Thomas to portray Jesus as an Indian rather than as a Jew. See A.D. Thomas, The Life of Christ (24 paintings), SPCK, 1948)

(5) Lectures II p.28

Journeying God".⁽¹⁾ It is he who, in the divine plan, sets out on his journey from his Father, "the still God", to bring salvation to men. He comes, and in his love for the men of the far country he destroys self, denying himself in taking the form of a servant, and so becoming transparent to God.

At first, Sen thinks of Christ as accomplishing his work for mankind chiefly through the moral influence of his self-sacrificing love. As we shall see, this interpretation has become a very popular one with many Indian theologians,⁽²⁾ for whom the ideas of sacrifice in the Jewish sense, or of juridical substitution, are hard to accept. Sen writes,

"I have always regarded the Cross as a beautiful emblem of self-sacrifice unto the glory of God The vast moral influence of [Christ's] life and death still lives in human society."⁽³⁾

For Sen, at this stage,

"the two fundamental doctrines of Gospel ethics are ... the doctrines of forgiveness and self-sacrifice,"⁽⁴⁾

and Christ's death is an act of "supernatural moral heroism."⁽⁵⁾

"His death on the Cross affords the highest practical illustration of self-sacrifice. He sacrificed his life for the sake of truth, and the benefit of the world."⁽⁶⁾

The moral which Sen draws from this is that we too, in imitation of the wonderful example of Christ, should sacrifice ourselves for the good of our country and of the world, and so find regeneration and sanctification. Through Christ, "as through a brother's example, fallen humanity rises sanctified and regenerated."⁽⁷⁾

(1) Lectures II, pp. 16,17

(2) e.g. Appasamy. v. infra p. 312 ff.

(3) Lectures I, p.7

(4) *ibid.* p.38

(5) *ibid.* p.18

(6) *ibid.* p.44

(7) Lectures II, p.27 (1882)

Christ is, then, our example, yet in our unaided strength we are not capable of following him, and must avail ourselves of the power of the Holy Spirit, who alone is able to "apply" to us the effect of Christ's example:

"Christ is but an example in history, an objective portraiture of faithful sonship. To convert it into a subjective force something else is needed." (1)

This brings us to an interesting exposition of the functions of the three Persons of the Trinity. It is the Father who reveals Himself - both in Creation and in Redemption; the Son is the great Example of suffering Love; but ultimately the One who applies to us the work of salvation is the Spirit.

"It is this Spirit that makes Christ, otherwise a mere historical character, a sanctifying power within us ... The Father manifests Himself first in creation and then in his beloved Son, Jesus; but in neither of these manifestations does he save sinners. It is when He works within us as the Holy Spirit ... that we are converted and become altogether new creatures". (2)
"The Son has other functions ... but to save the sinner is not one of these. He may teach, he may reveal, he may show the way, but he can never give us the power of overcoming sin. The way to do it - that is Christ. The power to do it - that is the Holy Ghost." (3)

There is a link in Sen's thought between Christ's nature as "Divine Humanity" and his work of inspiring men through his example of loving self-abnegation. Christ through his kenosis has become transparent to the Divine, and through Him - by the Power of the Spirit - our humanity can be exalted and changed to his pattern:

"In him we see human nature perfected by true affiliation to the Divine Nature He shows us not how God can become man nor how man can become God, but how we can exalt our humanity by making it more and more divine." (4)

(b) The "Multiplication of Christ"

Sen is very conscious of the fact that the salvation offered in Christ is for

(1) ibid. p.40

(2) ibid. p.41

(3) ibid. p.40

(4) Lectures II p.20 (1882)

all men. Christ the Son has come to earth as the Journeying God in order that through him and through his obedience all men might realize their sonship:

"If sonship there was, it was bound to develop itself not in one solitary individual but in all humanity. Surely universal redemption is the purpose of creation." (1)

At this stage of his thought Sen is interested chiefly in universal or cosmic rather than individual salvation, and his exposition of the process by which men come to share in the benefits of Christ's work is most interesting, providing as it does a foretaste of an argument which was to be elaborated in a Hindu setting by Sri Aurobindo, and in Christian terms by P. Chenchiah in India, and Teilhard de Chardin in Europe. The purpose of God is what de Chardin calls "Christification". Right from the time of creation God's plan is that men should be like Christ, and through the coming of Christ into the world this "Christification" has become possible even for sinful man.

"The problem of creation", says Sen, "was not how to produce one Christ, but how to make every man Christ. Christ was only a means, not the end. He was the 'way'." (2)

The process of Christification appears to have been, for Sen, to some extent at least that of a sort of automatic evolution. Christ himself represents the finished product of this evolutionary process, but through the power of the Spirit men too are given the possibility of becoming like him, and so evolving to a divinely human nature in conformity with God's original purpose:

"The Father continually manifests His wisdom and mercy in creation, till [men] take the form of pure Sonship in Christ, and then out of one little seed-Christ is evolved a whole harvest of endless and ever-multiplying Christs." (3)

In a somewhat grotesque phrase he even speaks of

"the one ideal Christ manifest in multiform concrete little Christs." (4)

(1) *ibid.* p.14

(2) *ibid.* p.15 op. Chenchiah: "True evangelism consists in reproducing Jesus"

(3) *ibid.* p.16

v. *infra* p.372.

(4) *ibid.* p.33

So, too, when speaking of the meaning of the eucharist, Sen holds that it is not enough for the Christian merely to be Christlike:

"Be Christ", he writes, "Incorporate him into your being ... Make him your flesh and blood. Let us all be so many Christs, each a small Christ in his own humble way." (1)

It is not easy to understand precisely what Sen's meaning is here. Is he implying - as is implied by later writers like Chenchiah or Dhanjibhai Fakirbhai⁽²⁾ - that Christ is the "new Man", and that we are called to be "new men" in Him, by a process of mystical union which may be described as "reproduction" (Chenchiah) or "multiplication" (Dhanjibhai)? Or is he rather re-stating the Vedantic maha-vakya "aham Brahma asmi" - "I am Brahman"? It is difficult to be sure, but at least it is clear that Sen sees the process of Christification as one of evolution and growth, and that it is by the power of the Spirit that our lives can be so conformed to Christ and transformed.

(c) Atonement

In his last great lecture, delivered in 1883, Sen advances still further in his use of traditional Christian terminology, for which at times he almost apologizes to his largely Hindu audience. He speaks of atonement, substitution, mediation and even blood. "Atonement" is of course an etymologically neutral word, and so he expounds it:

"Atonement simply means At-one-ment - to be at one; to be reconciled According to this view the central idea of atonement is unity, or the reconciliation of humanity with divinity. Man waged war with God; through atonement they are reconciled ... The atoning medium ... is Jesus Christ, the Son of God ... Harmony was needed: the wicked world cried for an atonement. Jesus, the peacemaker, appeared on the scene and proclaimed peace." (3)

It is Christ alone, Christ in his Divine Humanity, Christ dwelling in the human heart, who is able to exercise this ministry of reconciliation:

(1) Lectures II p.488 We the Apostles of the New Dispensation (1881)

(2) v. infra pp. 372, 549.

(3) Lectures II p.90

"Christ actually saw himself, an undivided Christ with his seamless raiment, dwelling and breathing in every human heart. And so he offered himself before God as an atonement for all mankind ... Yes, I would have you believe in Christ's atonement.⁽¹⁾... The Universal Atonement for all mankind. Jesus, thou art atonement incarnate. Thou art love and reconciliation. Thou art unity divine and unity human."⁽²⁾

In exercising this atonement, Christ can also be described as the Mediator, though here too one feels that the work of mediation is more a corollary of his divinely human nature than of any one particular mediatorial act. Christ is "a mediating link between man and God."⁽³⁾ In a rather strange illustration he describes those Benares boxes, where each box as it is opened is found to contain another box, and so on in a long series. So too, he says, as man seeks to reach God he has to pass from his humanity to the "Invisible Supreme Essence", and this is only possible through Christ, who thus performs a "necessary logical mediation".⁽⁴⁾ We cannot reach the Godhead

"except through that pure Sonship which environs and encloses it ... In this sense Christ is our Mediator."⁽⁵⁾

Here we see a certain reluctance to deal with the significance of the death of Christ as distinct from his nature, but this reluctance is finally overcome and we find some moving passages explaining the sufferings of Christ in relation to the removal of the sin of the world. He takes the burden of sin and sorrow on himself:

"The world in agony cried, and the entire load of its agony pressed upon Jesus' bosom, and he too cried in bitterness. It was the bitterness of transferred sorrow. It was the agony of the world in him... He suffered for the sorrows of others".⁽⁶⁾

Even here, however, Sen does not pursue this line of thought, beyond suggesting that

(1) It should be remembered that Sen is addressing a largely Hindu audience.

(2) *ibid.* p.88

(3) Lectures II p.35 (1882)

(4) *ibid.* p.34. Compare the Hindu psychology of the five "sheaths" (Kosa), v. *infra* p.213.

(5) *ibid.* p.35

(6) *ibid.* p.477

Christ's followers are in a small measure sharing in this ministry of suffering.

There is, however, an act of substitution. Christ

"substituted himself for the world, and at once heaven and earth, hitherto two, became one. The substitution is a grand fact. Its moral grandeur who can comprehend?... Believe in this substitution, and we are all one in Christ ... In his atoning blood the most polluted of all ages and climes find a place. For every one of us here today, individually and collectively he offered himself as an atonement. He became one with us, and he took all with himself into the bosom of God ... His atoning blood overflowed the little embankments of his Jewish humanity and burst like a universal deluge upon all humanity, swallowing the remotest parts of the globe ... Thus the world is lost in Christ ... Humanity has sunk deep in the sea of Christ's atonement."(1)

"Christ has offered himself as an atonement for all flesh and for all eternity. It is done, it is done. He has given his precious blood for all of us, whether we believe it or not ... We have only to apply it to ourselves ... Let us all believe that he has died for you and me, and the atonement on our side is completed ... Behold, I am reconciled to all through the blood of him crucified. Fellow-countrymen, be ye also reconciled through him."(2)

It is difficult not to be moved by these words, one of Sen's last public utterances, in which he appeals to all his fellow-countrymen, of whatever religion, to accept by faith Christ's death and the atonement it brings for those who receive it. Though he speaks here of the blood of Christ it was hard for Sen, as it is hard for all Hindus, to accept easily this imagery which is so meaningful in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and yet so repellent to most Hindus.(3) We find that he turns more readily to the symbolism of the Living Water and Baptism, applying it to the saving work of Christ:

"The simplicity of Christ-life is my creed, the sweet harmony of Christ's atonement is my joy. Christ is my food and drink, and Christ is the water that cleanses me."(4)

We can see here how Sen, with his deep personal experience of love for Christ,

(1) *ibid.* p.91

(2) *ibid.* pp.93-4

(3) It is true that blood-sacrifices (e.g. of horses) are mentioned in the Vedas, but the whole tradition of modern Hinduism is against the idea of blood-sacrifice.

(4) *ibid.* p.98.

is trying to move forward from a mere theory of moral influence, and finally finds his way closer and closer to an orthodox view of the Atonement.

(5) The Holy Spirit

As we have seen, the Holy Spirit is, for Sen, the divine power which makes the work of Christ available for men. He does not give a detailed exposition of the meaning of the word "Person" as applied to the Spirit, but that he thought of the Spirit as personal is indicated by the fact that he uses the pronoun "He". When expounding the meaning of sat, cit, ananda in terms of the Trinity he describes the Spirit as ananda (Joy) and writes, "Has not the Holy Ghost been described as the 'Comforter?' Truly He is the heart's joy." (1)

When God, through Christ, carries out his work of salvation among men, and in Him goes

"through the whole length and breadth of humanity, illumining and sanctifying all generations of mankind with the radiance of Divinity", (2)

then it is in fact the Holy Spirit who carries out this action, applying Christ's work to men.

"Behold Christ, Christ, Christ everywhere, in all ages and in all nations. Here you see the spread of Divine Sonship, like a sweeping flood of light and life, carrying all mankind heavenward. Do you know what this is? It is the Holy Spirit. Yes, after the Son comes the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost drags Christ-life into the hearts and souls of all men, breaking and annihilating the sins and iniquities of ages, and makes all mankind partakers of Divine life. So comes the Spirit of the heavenly Dove, like a Pentecostal shower, upon us all, quenching the carnality of generations, and making a very heaven upon earth". (3)

The Holy Spirit works within men, changing lives and making new creatures of them. To the Spirit

(1) Lectures II, p.17

(2) ibid. p.15

(3) ibid.

"alone belongs the power of converting all mankind into sons of God ... The Holy Ghost has leavened us with Christ-leaven, and established the Logos within us as the Divine Son subjectified."(1)

The meaning of this word "subjectify" is important. Sen understands it as the process by which we become united with Christ. He who was outside us, the historical Christ, the "objective" object of our interest or affection, comes to dwell within us, in a "subjective" or inner, spiritual way. It is the work of the Spirit to bring us into this living, inward relationship with Christ, and because this is in fact a "saving" work, Sen is prepared to refer to the Holy Spirit as "Saviour".(2)

He writes as follows:

"It is only the Holy Spirit that can convert outward truth into inward purity. It is this Spirit that makes Christ, otherwise a mere historical character, a sanctifying power within us ... It is when He works within us as the Holy Spirit ... that we are converted and become altogether new creatures. Was not Christ Himself baptized by the Holy Spirit? ... If then we are baptized into new life, our baptism must come to us not from Christ but from the Holy Ghost."(3)

We have already noticed the similarity between Sen's thought and certain aspects of the work of Teilhard de Chardin. In his treatment of the Spirit we come closer to a follower of de Chardin's, R.C. Zaehner, who sees the Holy Spirit as the power and source of development at work in evolution and in the emergence and growth of human religion and society.(4) Zaehner sees this "convergence" as turning in more and more on its centre, which is Christ - for him the "whole Christ" as represented in the Roman Catholic Church. Sen also sees the work of the Spirit as culminating in an "institution" - his own "Church of the New Dispensation", which he believed to represent the ultimate stage of mankind's spiritual development. The Old Testament, he believed, spoke to men of God's self-revelation to the Jews. In

(1) *ibid.* p.42

(2) *ibid.* p.43

(3) *ibid.* pp.40,41. The tendency to identify Christ with the Holy Spirit is seen later in V. Chakkarai. v. *infra* p. V422 ff.

(4) The Convergent Spirit, esp. chap. 7

the New Testament comes the revelation of Christ. And now we have moved forward to the age of the Spirit, the age of the New Dispensation, when the Holy Ghost is active in the world in a new and powerful way:

"The New Church will teach us the Holy Ghost. The Old Testament was the First Dispensation; the New Testament was the Second; unto us in these days has been vouchsafed the Third Dispensation. Unite and amalgamate these three, and you have the Trinity Church of the world." (1)

The fact that Sen links the ongoing work of the Spirit so closely with his own Church of the New Dispensation should not blind us to the fact of his great concern that the Spirit should be known and felt as a reality, as the great guiding power, in the modern world. He felt strongly that Western Christianity had been neglecting the doctrine of the Spirit, and that it was the privilege of India, with her strong "spiritual" tradition, to restore this lost emphasis.

(6) The Doctrine of the Trinity

It will be remembered that Ram Mohan Roy, the founder of the Brahma Samaj, was a thorough-going Unitarian. Sen too had many contacts with Unitarians, and yet his thought moves constantly in the direction of full acceptance of the doctrine of the Trinity. His final position is expressed with great power in a lecture which he gave in 1882 entitled That Marvellous Mystery - The Trinity.

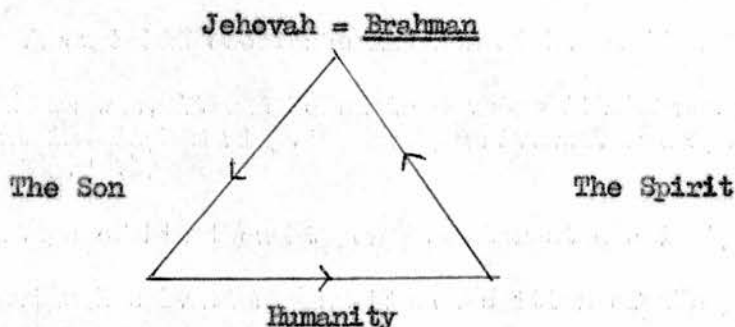
Consistently with his devotion to "The Oriental Christ" he finds the doctrine of the Trinity also enshrined in Hindu thought, in the famous definition of Brahman as sat, cit and ananda:

"Indeed", he writes, "the Trinity is a doctrine of natural and universal theology." (2)

(1) Lectures II, p.43

(2) Lectures II, p.4. On the Hindu use of the composite word Saccidananda as the most complete description of Brahman possible op. Peter May: Banaras and Bethlehem: Some Aspects of the Christian Faith in Relation to Hinduism, (CLS, Madras, 1959), p.33. He quotes the Vedantasara of Sadananda: "I take refuge in the Self, the Indivisible, the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss (saccidananda) Absolute", and "Reality is Brahman which is without a second and is Existence, Knowledge and Bliss". (Vedantasara of Sadananda, edited by Swami Nikhilananda, 1 and 33).

His theology of the Trinity can be reproduced in diagrammatic form:



The apex, he writes,

"is the very God Jehovah, the Supreme Brahma of the Vedas. From Him comes down the Son in a direct line, an emanation from Divinity. Thus God descends and touches one end of the base of humanity, then running all along the base permeates the world, and then by the power of the Holy Ghost drags up regenerated humanity to Himself. Divinity coming down to humanity is the Son; Divinity carrying up humanity to heaven is the Holy Ghost. This is the whole Philosophy of Salvation." (1)

Following this description of the work of the different Persons of the Trinity we get a sort of table of equivalents, beginning with the Christian Trinity and ending with Saccidananda:

Father	Son	Holy Spirit
The Creator	The Exemplar	The Sanctifier
The still God	The Journeying God	The returning God
"I am"	"I love"	"I save"
Force	Wisdom	Holiness
True	Good	Beautiful
<u>Sat</u>	<u>Cit</u>	<u>Ananda</u>
(Truth)	(Intelligence)	(Joy)

(2)

"Thus", he writes, "The Trinity of Christian Theology corresponds strikingly with the Sachidananda of Hinduism. You have three conditions, three manifestations of Divinity. Yet there is one God, one Substance amid three phenomena. Not three Gods, but one God. Whether alone, or manifest in the Son, or quickening humanity as the Holy Spirit, it is the same God, the same identical Deity, whose unity continues indivisible amid multiplicity of manifestations... who can deny that there is an essential and undivided unity in the so-called Trinity? Were I to contemplate the mystery of that marvel of Christianity, the Trinity, in solitary communion, I would close my eyes, and lost in wonder, rapt in solemn silence, I would point my finger thus, - Above, Below, Within; the Father, above, the Son below, the Holy Ghost within." (3)

(1) Lectures II, p.16

(2) ibid. pp.16-17

(3) ibid. p.17

There is no doubt that Sen's view here inclines towards Modalism, and one can see the old Unitarian tradition of the Brahma Samaj asserting itself despite his detailed exposition of the functions of the three Persons of the Trinity. He is not satisfied even with the use of the term "Person" in this context, and here touches on one of the most difficult points of Indian Christian terminology, the fixing of a suitable equivalent for persona, Person. He writes:

"Remember the true Trinity is not Three Persons, but Three functions of the same Person."⁽¹⁾

Before we simply dismiss Sen as Sabellian, we must remember how anxious he was to keep away from anything which might savour of polytheism. The traditional Christian formulation "Three Persons in one God" must have appeared to him as verging towards tritheism, for that is the implication when one uses the English word "Person" in its normal sense, or when one attempts to use the various Sanskritic translations which have been suggested, such as vyakti or purusa. Sen is perhaps here feeling his way towards a completely new, and fully Indian formulation of the mystery, in terms of sat, cit and ananda. And it may be that ultimately the trail here blazed by him, and later followed by Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya⁽²⁾ and J. Monchanin⁽³⁾, will prove more fruitful to the Christian Mission in India than concepts derived from Greek philosophy or even from modern Western Personalism.

The conflict between Trinitarian and Unitarian concepts in Sen's mind was so strong that he attempted to solve them by coining a new name - "Uni-Trinitarianism"⁽⁴⁾ - which he applied to his Church of the New Dispensation, as indicating that in it was to be found the fulfilment of the Theism of the Hindus, the Jews and the Christians. We find that in his treatment of this doctrine, as also of others, Sen's

(1) ibid. p.18

(2) v. infra pp.194 ff.

(3) v. infra p.558.

(4) Lectures II, p.47

judgment is intuitive rather than consistent, and yet, in the course of his exuberant lectures he throws out ideas of the greatest importance, which have been left for his successors to work out in greater detail.

(7) The Church

Sen's "Church of the New Dispensation" has already been mentioned. Despite his great personal devotion to Christ he never felt attracted towards the Christian Church as he saw it in India, or on his visit to England in 1870. Indian Christians seemed to him to be denationalized, and isolated not only from the Hindu religion but from Indian culture. He felt it impossible to join such a church, and besides he was already a member and indeed an acarya in the Brahma Samaj. Nevertheless his interest in Christianity and his devotion to Christ led him to incorporate into his branch of the Brahma Samaj many features taken from the life of the Christian Church, and ultimately these became a normal part of the life and practice of the body which he named "The Church of the New Dispensation."

Sen thought of his Church as the ultimate development of religion. Just as there are people to-day like Dr. Radhakrishnan who look forward to the establishment of a "world religion", so Sen attempted to found such a religion, which, though modelled chiefly on the Christian Church, and explicitly centred on Christ, yet claimed the best of all the great religions, as is shown by its emblem, which included the Cross of Christ, the trident of Siva, and the Muslim star and crescent. (1) This Church should not be thought of simply as a piece of practical syncretism, for in fact it kept developing more and more in the direction of Christian orthodoxy, to the alarm of Sen's Hindu and Brahmo friends. It should rather be regarded as the effort of a highly gifted man to interpret the nature of the Church in a way that

(1) It is worth noting that Sen as early as 1869 was teaching the equality of all religions, a doctrine usually ascribed to Sri Ramakrishna, whose first meeting with Sen was about 1876. In later years Sen's syncretism was dominated more and more by his approach to Christian orthodoxy.

made sense to people with a Hindu cultural background. Here once again Sen touches a crucial point in Indian Christian theology, for a great many of his successors, baptized though they were in the Christian Church, have eventually taken up a position very remote from its actual corporate life. The list includes such distinguished names as Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, Sadhu Sundar Singh, V. Chakkarai and P. Chenchiah. Sen, in his typically enthusiastic way, rather than simply criticizing the organized Church as he found it, tried to turn the Brahma Samaj into a Christian Church. It is not surprising that he failed, and that to-day comparatively little trace remains of the Church of the New Dispensation. Yet the experiment is not without theological interest.

Sen thinks of the New Dispensation as above all the Church of the Holy Spirit, as it were the end-product of the process of spiritual evolution which the Spirit has been inspiring ever since the creation. He writes:

"Behold the beauty of this chain of logical sequence from Adam to Christ and from Christ down to the modern times! Now all prophets and reformers, all Scriptures and dispensations are linked together in the unity of a vast synthesis ... Bring into a focus these scattered dispensations, and you will at once find their harmony in science, their unity in truth and God". (1)

Sen's eclecticism cannot be disguised, but he himself makes it clear that it is what he calls "Christian eclecticism", in which Christ Himself becomes the touchstone by which every doctrine or practice must be tested. We must, he says,

"Mix Christ with all that is Christian in other creeds." (2) Such is the pure Christian eclecticism of the Church of the New Dispensation ... All that dishonours Christ it disclaims. Whatsoever is Christian and pure and holy my Church rejoicingly glorifies ... I do firmly believe that whatsoever is true and good and beautiful is of Christ." (3) ... "Nay, I would go further, and declare Christ to be the centre of this Broad Church." (4)

(1) The Brahma Samaj, Calcutta, 1886, pp. 363-5, quoted by Muliyl, op.cit. p.274

(2) Lectures II, P.84

(3) *ibid.* p.85

(4) *ibid.* p.86

It is well known that Sen celebrated sacraments in his Church of the New Dispensation, the sacraments of baptism (which he administered to himself as well as to others), and of a eucharist in which the elements used were rice and water. We shall not here discuss the significance or efficacy of these sacraments which were, after all, divorced from the historic Church. We shall, however, attempt to understand something of the sacramental teaching which Sen associated with them.

The Lord's Supper, for him, was a means for "spiritual identification" with Christ: (1)

"[Christ] wanted his followers to eat him and assimilate him to their hearts, and incorporate him with their very being ... It was his wish that men should enter into the highest communion with the Deity, and dwell with Him in the inmost recesses of their hearts; nay, dive into the depth of the Divine Essence, and there enjoy bliss, blessedness, and beatitude everlastingly." (2)

Again, "Nothing short of internal assimilation and absorption could satisfy Jesus. And this beautiful idea he embodied symbolically in the Eucharist. He asked his disciples to eat his flesh and drink his blood. In other words, he wished to be accepted by the world subjectively, and not objectively. Let us be satisfied that every bit of flesh and every drop of blood in you and me is Christ before we proclaim ourselves as his followers." (3)

Here once again the thought is highly suggestive, and yet elusive. Is Sen simply pointing to the analogy, that as our physical bodies are nourished by the bread and wine, so our "souls", our true selves, feed upon Christ spiritually by faith? Or is he saying that through the Communion we "realize" our identification with God - tat tvam asi? It is hard to be sure.

In another passage Sen takes almost a Quaker view of the Sacraments. Every meal, every bath is to be thought of as a sacrament of union or of cleansing. "Bathe and eat" are the simple commands of the Gospel. (4)

(1) Lectures I, p.382

(2) ibid. p.383

(3) ibid. p.480

(4) Lectures II, p.98

"Baptism and the eucharist represent and symbolize the two grand and essential principles of Christ's creed. Be baptized in holy water, eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God, said Christ, and ye shall be saved." (1)
"Sanctify the water in which ye bathe and the food ye eat." (2) "Why shall you not realize Christ's baptism in your daily immersion, and make the Divinity that dwelleth in water cleanse both your body and soul? Ascribe no merit to water ... As the body becometh clean by immersion in water so doth baptism wash off the sins of the heart." (3)

The Christian eucharist, as celebrated in Christian Churches with bread and wine is an offence to Hindus. But the offence can be avoided, while retaining what is essential:

"Substitute rice for bread and water for wine, and realize a holy man's flesh and blood in those things before you taste them, and you have a rational holy communion, at once Hindu and Christian. As you eat your daily rice let it go into the system as the very flesh of Christ and be assimilated to your flesh" ... "The carnal flesh and blood of the old man will disappear, and the spiritual body of Christ shall be incorporated in you, and you shall have a perfectly new life." (4)

It can be seen that Sen is not merely theorizing about the sacraments. In his Church of the New Dispensation he felt the need for them, and however unorthodox their institution it is clear that for him at least they had deep meaning, and a meaning perhaps not so very far removed from orthodox Protestantism. The eucharist was indeed for him a means of Grace, a means for experiencing deeper union with Christ by faith, and for the reception of spiritual nourishment.

(8) Sen's Attitude to Hinduism

While highly critical of many aspects of Hinduism, and especially of polytheism, Sen had a deep affection for the faith in which he had grown up, and he constantly seeks for points of similarity between Christianity and Hinduism. He is not unaware, either, of the lofty ethical monotheism of Judaism, and the religious activism of Islam. Christ, he was sure, had come to fulfil all that was best in

(1) *ibid.*

(2) *ibid.* p.100

(3) *ibid.* p.103 He does not deal with Baptism as the Sacrament of incorporation into the historic Church.

(4) *ibid.* p.105

these faiths: "The Mosaic dispensation only?" he asks; "Perhaps the Hindu dispensation also": (1)

"Behold Christ cometh to us as an Asiatic in race, as a Hindu in faith, as a kinsman and a brother, and he demands your heart's affection ... He comes to fulfil and perfect that religion of communion for which India has been panting, as the hart panteth after the waterbrooks." "For Christ is a true Yogi, and he will surely help us to realize our national idea of a Yogi". (2) He is "an Asiatic ascetic, whose wealth is communion, and whose riches prayers." (3)

And so he asks his Hindu friends to turn to the Christ who is already with them, the Christ who is hidden in their Hindu faith: (4)

"Christ is already present in you. He is in you, even when you are unconscious of his presence ... For Christ is 'the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the World'.... He will come to you as self-surrender, as asceticism, as Yoga, as the life of God in man, as obedient and humble sonship." (5)

Following up this idea, he sees Christ, as did Justin Martyr, in all that was good in every philosophy and religion:

"Verily in Socrates was Christ, as the early Fathers held; and in Confucius too was Christ, and in Nanak, and in Chaitanya, and in Paul, and in Luther was he. In him they are all reconciled, and their broken lights unite to form the perfect Logos, the Word of God". (6)

He describes Christ as "universal" and subjective", meaning by this that he is for all men, is to be found hidden in all faiths, and is to be truly known and seen not by historical investigation so much as by inner, "subjective" experience.

"Even in barbarian philosophy and in all Hellenic literature they saw and adored their Logos - Christ ... This is the Christ who was in Greece and Rome, in Egypt and India ... Every doctrine that is true, every form of righteousness, every virtue that belongs to the Son, is the true subjective Christ." (7)

(1) Lectures L. p.387

(2) ibid. p.388-9

(3) ibid. p.390

(4) Compare the illuminating exposition of this theme in R.Panikkar: The Unknown Christ of Hinduism. v. infra p. 566.

(5) Lectures L pp.391-2

(6) Lectures II, p.96

(7) ibid. p.32

Christ is there, in the hearts of men of all religions, waiting only to be seen, realized, unveiled:

"In every true Brahmin, in every loyal votary of the Veda on the banks of the sacred Ganges, is Christ, the Son of God. The holy word, the eternal Veda dwells in every one of us ... Go into the depths of your own consciousness, and you will find this indwelling Logos.... The real recognition of Christ has taken place in India.... only the nominal recognition remains."(1)

Sen's idea of a world religion is not a merely syncretistic one, like Radhakrishnan's. Certainly he wishes to draw on the riches of all traditions, and certainly he longs for the unity of all men. But always at the centre of his visions of evolution and union there stands the figure of Christ. Christ provides the key to the development. Men of different faiths must now unite, he believes,

"in that Kingdom of heaven which knows no sect and inculcates no sectarian dogma, whose cardinal doctrines are the love of God and the love of man, and which unifies all mankind in one man, even Christ, the Son of God."(2)

Such a unification of all men in Christ was Keshub Chunder Sen's aim in all his writing, and in his Church of the New Dispensation. His own personal experience of Christ led him to see that only in Him can all men be united, and that the World Religion of the future, if it is ever to come, will be one which places Christ firmly in the Centre, so that all men may be one in Christ, the True Man.

Ram Mohan Roy and Keshub Chunder Sen were the first two Hindu Reformers to meet and face the challenge of Christianity. Certain parts of that challenge, in particular the ethical teaching of Jesus, they accepted. They were also - and especially Ram Mohan Roy - serious in their detailed, scholarly study of and attempt to understand the Christian faith. But the interpretation which they provided, though interesting and ingenious, and full of hints which were later taken up by others, both Christian and non-Christian, was fundamentally different from the Christian faith as handed down in the Bible and received in the Church. Their basic failure may be said to have been their attempt to make Christianity conform to the pattern of a nature-

(1) *ibid.* p.33

(2) *ibid.* p.95 *op. supra* p.51.

religion, a natural theology, a philosophy, when in fact the Christian faith is rooted in the particularism of history, of a particular divine-human Person, and of the personal worth of each individual. Dr. Muliyl writes:

"These movements did not have their beginning in faith, but in unbelief. From the point of view of the Church in India it is the story of a Great Rejection". (1)

When we think of Sen's undoubted personal experience of Christ we may dissent from this judgment in its total rejection of these thinkers. They tried, however, to accept Christianity on their own terms, and Christianity can never be subjected to such treatment.

(1) Muliyl, op.cit. p.126

CHAPTER V

THE RATIONAL REFUTATION OF HINDUISM: NEHEMIAH GOREH (1825-1895)

While Keshub Chunder Sen was evolving his own interpretation of Christianity in the Church of the New Dispensation, there had arisen a man of a very different stamp, a champion of Christian orthodoxy who engaged in a long polemic with the Brahma Samaj, and published a classical refutation of the six systems of orthodox Hinduism. His name was Nilakantha Sastri Goreh.⁽¹⁾ He took the Christian name of Nehemiah, and in later life, after his ordination in the Anglican Church, was widely known as Father Goreh. Already before his conversion Goreh had achieved a considerable reputation as a Sanskrit scholar and exponent of orthodox Hinduism, and, with the possible exception of Pandita Ramabai, he was probably of all Indian Christians the one most deeply versed in Hindu learning. His life-story and his extensive writings are of the greatest interest, for they show the struggle of a sensitive soul to find the truth, and later to refute the Hinduism of his contemporaries, both orthodox and reformed, while at the same time striving to show that the Christian faith fulfils the needs and longings of the Indian mind and heart. In some ways his reaction to the Hinduism in which he had grown up may be described as negative, yet he never ceased to be consciously and constructively Indian, not merely in his way of life, but in his expression of theological thought.

Nilakantha Sastri was by birth a Chitpavan Brahman of the Konkan, a caste from which two other great leaders of the Indian Church have sprung - Pandita Ramabai and Narayan Vaman Tilak.⁽²⁾ His family, however, was not living in the Konkan

(1) Sources: C.E. Gardner: Life of Father Goreh, London, 1900 (Longmans Green). The author of the biography, C.E. Gardner, collected Goreh's published works and had them bound in two volumes. I acknowledge with gratitude the privilege of consulting one such set at the Mission House of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, Cowley, Oxford.

There is a brief account in Rajaiah D. Paul, Chosen Vessels (CLS, Madras, 1961)

(2) J.C. Winslow, Narayan Vaman Tilak (YMCA, Calcutta, 1930) p.1.

(the coastal strip south of Bombay, now part of the State of Maharashtra), but in Bundelkhand, where members of his parents' families served as hereditary Divans or Prime Ministers in various Indian States. Nilakantha Sastri was born here in the village of Kashipura on 8th February 1825, in what is now the Hamirpura District of the State of Uttar Pradesh.

His father and an uncle had settled in Benares, and it was there that Nilakantha grew up, in an atmosphere of the most orthodox Hinduism. He was married as a boy of about twelve, but his first wife died, while still a child, and in 1844, at the age of nineteen he married again, his bride this time being a girl of seven. He was educated, by a private tutor, in the ways of Hindu orthodoxy, the family belonging to the Saivite tradition. Nilakantha, however, early showed his theological independence, and changed from the Saivite to the Vaishnavite tradition, partly at least because, as a follower of Sankara's advaita, he came to the conclusion that Sankara and his immediate followers were worshippers of Visnu rather than Siva. Even at this very early stage of his theological development we can see how he brings his acute critical faculty to bear on the evidence before him, and makes up his mind accordingly. Having come to the reasoned conclusion that according to the more ancient Hindu authorities Visnu had priority over Siva, and that Sankara also preferred Visnu, he took the very serious and unpopular step of changing his allegiance⁽¹⁾.

His first contact with Christianity seems to have taken place through the street-preaching of a CMS missionary, William Smith. He listened to the message, not because he was attracted, but from "a desire to dedicate his powers of intellect to its destruction".⁽²⁾ He became acquainted with Smith, who treated him with great sympathy, but refused to argue with him, urging him rather to read the Bible. Smith also lent Nilakantha Dr. John Muir's Sanskrit book Matapariksha, or An

(1) Life pp.35-6

(2) Life p. 38

Examination of the True Religion. (1) Nilakantha, in writing a Sanskrit refutation of this book, had to make a study of the Bible, and was greatly impressed by the Sermon on the Mount, gradually becoming convinced that Christianity must be a Divine inspiration. Many years later, writing of his experience at this time, he says:

"It was no desire to conversion, but pride and vanity which first moved him to discuss the truth of Christianity with the English missionaries. He only did so for the sake of showing his own knowledge and power in argument, to confute, as he imagined, their doctrine. While disputing with the missionaries the good Providence of God led him to look into the Scriptures, and then it was, by the power of the Word of God, the light of truth entered his soul." (2)

There now began a long and difficult period of reasoning and doubting.

Nilakantha had come to the point where he doubted his own religion, and he sought desperately for satisfactory and convincing evidence of the truth of Christianity. We see here a trait which was to remain prominent all his life - his longing for "Evidences", and for clear rational proof as the ground of belief. It is not surprising that even after his conversion to Christianity he had frequent times of depression and doubt. As his interest in Christianity grew, so did the opposition of his father and uncle, and many efforts were made to prevent his becoming a Christian, even to the extent of unmerciful beating, drugging, and the withdrawal of his wife. (3) At last, however, after many doubts and trials, he was baptized at Jaunpur on the 14th March, 1848 by the Rev. Robert Hawes of the CMS, being given the Christian name of Nehemiah. (4)

He immediately insisted on witnessing in public to his new-found faith, and acted as an honorary catechist and translator for the CMS, resolute always on earning his own livelihood by teaching and translating. He was, of course, put out of

(1) Matapariksha, a Sketch of the Argument for Christianity and against Hinduism in Sanskrit verse, by J. Muir, Esq., B.C.S., 1839. Muir, one of the most eminent Sanskritists of the time, was a brother of Sir William Muir, the Arabic scholar and later Principal of Edinburgh University.

(2) Life, p.42

(3) Life, pp.56 ff.

(4) ibid. 70

caste, and bitterly attacked by his former associates. The conversion of such a well-known Brahman led to other conversions also.⁽¹⁾ Almost immediately he began that literary work in which he was to become so distinguished, re-editing and improving the book Sat Mat Nirupan by Smith and Leupolt,⁽²⁾ 1852.

In the following year his only child, a daughter Ellen Lakshmi, was born. His wife, who had hesitated to become a Christian, was finally baptized, but died two days later. Ellen Goreh was adopted by a CMS missionary, and grew up in England, where she became a friend of Frances Ridley Havergal, and herself became a hymn-writer of some note.⁽³⁾ She eventually returned to India in 1880, and became a deaconess in Allahabad.

We read of an interesting scheme at this time which, though it did not materialize, indicates the kind of Christian witness which appealed to Goreh. The CMS missionary, William Smith, who had been instrumental in Goreh's conversion, was anxious to found a community, to be called Masihi Math or "Christ's Monastery", where he and the Indian catechists could live together, and go out to evangelize the city of Benares.⁽⁴⁾ There were insurmountable difficulties, and the plan was dropped, but we can see how Goreh's thoughts must have been turning already to the possibility of a truly Indian religious community. We shall see later how this ideal appealed to many great Indian Christians.⁽⁵⁾

By this time Goreh had become quite well known as a converted Brahman pandit, and in 1853 he was asked to travel to England as tutor to the young Maharaja Dhulip Singh, who on the annexation of the Punjab in 1849 had become a "pensioner" of the

(1) *ibid.* 85

(2) "An Inquiry concerning the True Religion". Goreh provided the book with suitable Sanskrit quotations. His work on this book, as on Muir's Matapariksha qualified him for his own important study in this field.

(3) She published a volume of poems entitled From India's Coral Strand, and wrote the well-known hymn: "In the Secret of His presence, how my soul delights to hide". (R.D. Paul, *op. cit.* pp.230-231)

(4) Life, p.88

(5) e.g. Brahmabandhab. v. *infra* pp. 134 ff.

East India Company, and at his own desire had been baptized in 1853. Thus at the age of 29 Goreh paid his first visit to Britain, where he was presented to the Queen, and visited many distinguished people in the company of the young Maharaja. The shy and retiring tutor, however, had no great liking for this kind of life, and returned to India after a year and a half.

While in England he attended some theological lectures at the CMS Institution at Islington, and made a special study of Paley's Evidences and Butler's Analogy.⁽¹⁾ In view of his later development in churchmanship it is interesting to read that he could not bear the cold, stilted services then in vogue in the parish churches of England, and "used to betake himself regularly to a small Baptist chapel down a back street",⁽²⁾ where the simplicity of the people and the earnestness of the preacher appealed to him.

There is an interesting account also of a visit which he paid to Professor Max Müller in Oxford. Goreh had no great regard for Müller, despite the acknowledged usefulness of his publication of the Sacred Books of the East. He felt that Müller was too thoroughly Western to have a real understanding of Hindu philosophy as he saw Hindu thought largely through rosy Western spectacles. Müller, on the other hand, found it hard to understand why a Hindu pandit should want to become a Christian.⁽³⁾ It is interesting to note these two clearly defined attitudes: the Western Sanskritist, a professing Christian, who yet tries to see all that is best in Hinduism, and the Hindu convert, who is firm in his rejection of his own tradition, while yet disappointed and dissatisfied with the Christianity of the West.

Goreh returned to India towards the end of 1855, on the same ship as Alexander Duff, who was returning from furlough to his educational work in Calcutta.

(1) Life p.96

(2) Life p.97

(3) ibid. p.98

On his way back to Benares he visited Ahmednagar, where his modest, but clear and winning testimony and argument was directly instrumental in the conversion of a number of highly educated young men, Hindu, Muslim and Parsi, some of whom later became well-known leaders in the Christian Church. (1) Throughout his life Goreh was a successful, though very modest and retiring evangelist, who considered it his special vocation to help in the overcoming of the intellectual doubts and difficulties of inquirers.

He was not without his own doubts -

"doubts about the truth of Christianity itself, doubt about the Divinity of Christ, doubt about the mode of Baptism". (2)

These and similar doubts troubled him all his life, and indeed there is little doubt that he became somewhat unbalanced psychologically, with constantly recurring doubts and scruples. Yet his faith and devotion always remained firm, and he was at his best in helping to remove the doubts of others. There is truth in the comments of his biographer:

"Indeed, we can see from the way in which he makes the allusion that the doubts were scholastic, not devotional. His subtle intellect was ever striving to prove by natural reasoning what he firmly held as a matter of faith. Such were the efforts of medieval schoolmen to demonstrate points of Christian faith by rationalistic arguments." (3)

It was, indeed, "fides quaerens intellectum". Goreh's faith, and his devotion to Christ, never falter, but he constantly doubts his own worthiness, and never attains to real joy in believing. He constantly seeks for intellectual certainty, for positive "evidence" of what he believes, and as constantly he is disappointed, though he is able to remove the doubts of many others.

In 1857 Goreh, who had hitherto been well within the evangelical tradition

(1) e.g. the Rev. Ratanji Navroji of Aurungabad, the Rev. Kasem Saheb Daud of Satara, and Mr Shahu Daji, editor of the Bombay Dnyanodaya. Life, p.101

(2) Life, p.96

(3) ibid, p.102

of the CMS, met Dr. William Kay, Principal of Bishop's College, Calcutta, who represented a more "Catholic" point of view. He was deeply impressed by Dr. Kay's saintliness and asceticism, and was encouraged by him to read a number of books which influenced him in an Anglo-Catholic direction. He read with interest Pusey's preface to Augustine's Confessions, and began to study the Fathers, in an effort to find out the authentic tradition of the Church, as he had been confused by the varying interpretations of Scripture which he found in the different commentaries he consulted. (1) His developing interest in the Fathers, the study of whom was at that time discouraged in evangelical circles, together with his natural inclination towards a life of disciplined asceticism, and the practice of confession, which brought a sense of objective release to his scrupulous soul, all combined to lead him into the Tractarian movement, which was then becoming well-known and influential in India as in England. For the first time in his life he experienced - albeit only temporarily - something of the joy of the Christian life. He writes:

"Oh, I now begin to see something of the greatness of His mercy and fatherly love: He bore with me for about twenty years, guided me to Calcutta, and here to His priest, and gave me courage to confess my sins and again set me free from the bonds of my iniquity by absolving me from all my sins through the mouth of His priest. I ought to write with feelings of overflowing joy, but, alas! my weakness of faith and my infirmities do not allow me to do so. For a time, however, my mind experienced something, in a very small measure, of course, of the joy of His pardoning mercy." (2)

It was in 1860 that Goreh published his best known work, Shaddarshana Darpana; or Hindu Philosophy Examined, by a Benares Pandit. (3) An English translation entitled A Rational Refutation of the Hindu Philosophical Systems was made by Fitz-Edward Hall, with the co-operation of the author, and published in 1862 (4), and for many

(1) Life, p.113

(2) ibid, p.116

(3) The title literally means, "Mirror of the Six Systems", i.e. The traditional six Hindu systems of Philosophy, viz., Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Mimamsa, Vedanta.

(4) The title Rational Refutation was in later editions modified to A Mirror of the Hindu Philosophical Systems. (Cited as "RR")

years continued to be regarded as a standard work on Hinduism, the third edition being published as recently as 1911.⁽¹⁾

The book is, as its name implies, a detailed logical examination of the main Hindu systems, in which Goreh, with clear and ruthless reasoning, makes of each point a reductio ad absurdum. He had discovered in his own experience that none of the traditional systems could meet the demands of his reason, and so he makes reason the instrument of his refutation of Hinduism as a religion.

He finds the Nyaya and Vaisesika systems the most reasonable of the six, as, unlike the Samkhya and Mimamsa, they do posit a God, and, unlike the Vedanta, do not identify God and the soul.⁽²⁾ But none of the systems is satisfactory, and he carefully refutes such ideas as that of salvation meaning emancipation from ignorance rather than sin;⁽³⁾ the permanence of the soul,⁽⁴⁾ the origin of the world from a material cause, be it prakriti (Samkhya), atoms (Nyaya) or maya (Vedanta)⁽⁵⁾; the desirability of refraining from all works, whether good or evil;⁽⁶⁾ the belief that the body is evil;⁽⁷⁾ the belief in transmigration;⁽⁸⁾ the idea of salvation as absorption in Brahman;⁽⁹⁾ etc. In his treatment of the Vedanta, which is of special importance, he gives a very interesting analysis of the three different types of existence posited by advaita thinkers, true, practical and apparent.⁽¹⁰⁾ This section is in fact a very effective critique of that traditional Hindu epistemology,

(1) by CLS, Madras

(2) RR 5.

(3) RR 142.

(4) RR 35.

(5) RR 39.

(6) RR 144.

(7) RR 126.

(8) RR 127.

(9) RR 152.

(10) paramarthika; vyavaharika; pratibhasika.

which seeks to establish the fact that Brahman alone truly exists; that the soul is Brahman; and that all else is illusory.

We shall consider some of these points in more detail later. Here we shall only say that, although this book sets out primarily to be a detailed critique of Hinduism, it in fact gives Goreh many opportunities of stating the Christian point of view, and in a very interesting way we can watch the development of a positive Christian statement at each point where he criticizes a particular Hindu doctrine. His theology develops entirely in relation to his apologetic task.

The success of Goreh's evangelistic and apologetic work continued, and in 1864 he was responsible for the conversion of a number of Muslim Sufis, and in particular of the well-known Maulvi Safdar Ali. ⁽¹⁾ Then in 1867 came his first meeting with his younger contemporary, Keshub Chunder Sen, who was already well-known as the leader of the Brahma Samaj. They were introduced by a missionary, J.R. Hill, who was struck by the contrast between them :

"Keshub handsome in person, confident and agreeable in deportment, with a ready flow of rhetoric; Nehemiah diffident, thoughtful, reticent."⁽²⁾

Goreh was astonished to find that Sen had not read Paley's Evidences, and indeed had not given anything like as much study and critical thought to the establishment of his theological position as Goreh had to his. He immediately felt called to make a special study of the Brahma Samaj, and a large proportion of his later writing consists in apologetic directed to the "Theists", as he called the members of the Brahma and Prarthna Samaj. One of his friends, Dr. Hooper, points out that his apologetic towards the Brahmos always follows a single syllogistic pattern:

1. That revelation which, to begin with, was the only one which contained dogmas about God and about man's welfare which are now widely accepted, is obviously a true revelation.

(1) Life, p.124

(2) Life, p.135-6

2. The notions which the Brahmos have now accepted about the nature and attributes of God, in virtue of which they have discarded orthodox Hinduism, can be proved to come from the Bible, and from no other source.
3. Therefore it is the rational duty of the Brahmos to accept the whole revelation of the Bible, and not just those parts of it which suit them, and can be accepted without risk of social ostracism. (1)

Goreh at first had great hopes that the Brahmos might yield to his arguments, and as the years went on he frequently spoke to them, held meetings for them, and wrote tracts and pamphlets for them, but with disappointing results. He could not understand how their reason could take them as far as a rejection of traditional Hindu orthodoxy, and acceptance of theistic principles, without leading them on to the fulness of the Catholic faith. Nevertheless his apologetic writings are of great interest, and he has been not unjustly compared to the Alexandrian Fathers, whom he resembles in his great output of such literature. (2)

At this time, (1867), Goreh went to Calcutta, where he stayed at Bishop's College, and made a special study of the Brahma Samaj, and of the Fathers. He also studied Greek, Hebrew and Latin. During this year he finally severed his long connection with the CMS, identifying himself more and more with the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church of England, and coming to be very critical of anything savouring of "Protestantism" or "Dissent". He appears to have thought - perhaps not unreasonably! - that a good deal of "Protestantism" was tainted with Unitarianism, against which he was eager to affirm orthodox catholicity. He writes:

"For my part, I greatly lament that Christianity has not been set before us in its full and Catholic form. It is my firm persuasion that the withholding of catholic doctrines, practices and discipline has done us, whether Christians or non-Christians, immense harm Puritanic principles, which,

(1) Adapted from Life p.138

(2) "If the world has yet any number of years in store, Fr. Goreh will occupy the place in future Indian Church History which we assign to such writers as Justin Martyr or Clement of Alexandria. The Brahmo was to him as constant an object of controversial antagonism as the Manichean was to St. Augustine". R.M. Benson, SSJE: Life, ix.

under the mistaken notion of spirituality, cause men to despise the sacred and solemn rites and ceremonies of religion, have led the Brahmos not only to despise positive ordinances of religion, but, under the same mistake, even to despise the very idea of external revelation.... To be short, a Catholic Christian cannot but think it not only unobjectionable, but most necessary, to set before those whose conversion to the true faith he desires, all those Catholic doctrines which he considers as true and important parts of the true faith". (1)

Hitherto Goreh had remained a layman, despite many suggestions that he should accept ordination, but now, in 1868, he was ordained deacon by Bishop Milman of Calcutta, and sent to work in Mhow, with special responsibility to act as a missionary to the Brahmos and the educated classes generally. In 1870 he was ordained priest.

In the same year Goreh entered into correspondence with Fr. R.M. Benson of Cowley, founder of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, and partly at least as a result of his request the Society opened work in India in 1874. Goreh was convinced that the most effective means of carrying out evangelistic work in India was through an ascetic religious brotherhood, and the corporate life and spiritual discipline of the Cowley Fathers appealed to him greatly. He soon made friends with, and was greatly helped by the pioneer missionary of the Society, Fr. O'Neill, though he eventually found that O'Neill's Western methods of discipline and devotion were not very suitable for his own needs. Western methods of meditation, for example, were difficult for him, (2) and the thought of tying himself to a vow of obedience to his superiors did not appeal to him. (3) Towards the end of 1875, however, he decided that he ought to join the Society, and in 1876 he again sailed for England in order to serve his Novitiate at Cowley.

He was now fifty-one and it was not easy to start a new life. He had many interesting and helpful experiences in England, and especially enjoyed meeting his two gurus, Pusey and Benson, but on the whole he found the life at Cowley very hard

(1) Life, p.140

(2) ibid. pp.169,213

(3) ibid. p.181

and the severe discipline irksome.⁽¹⁾ He persevered, however, and in 1876 was admitted as a Novice.⁽²⁾ He never became a professed member of the Society, as he concluded that he had no vocation, but he was allowed to remain in the Novitiate, and, despite later scruples and difficulties connected with his inability to keep the rule satisfactorily, he remained a Novice of the Society till his death.

After returning to India in 1877 Goreh worked for the Society, and was wisely given very considerable freedom to do the work for which he was specially fitted, the carrying on of Christian apologetic with members of the Reformed Hindu Societies, especially the Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthna Samaj, and later the Arya Samaj. For the last of these he had scant sympathy, as he was convinced that Swami Dayanand's interpretation of the Vedas was quite illegitimate.⁽³⁾ He made an appeal also to the Beni Israel, the Jewish Community of Bombay, and defended the doctrine of the Church of England against both "Protestants"⁽⁴⁾ and Roman Catholics.⁽⁵⁾

That his ministry was an effective one is shown by the fact that he was God's instrument for the conversion of one of the greatest of all Indian Christians, Pandita Ramabai.⁽⁶⁾ Like Goreh, Ramabai was a Chitpavan Brahman, who as a child became a noted Sanskrit scholar through the teaching of her father, Anant Sastri. On his death she rapidly achieved fame as a woman pandit. After a happy, but tragically brief married life she became even more famous as a pioneer of women's rights, who in 1882 published a Marathi book, Morals for Women.⁽⁷⁾ Her Calcutta friendship with

(1) His biographer, Fr. Gardner SSJE., writes very frankly about the difficulties Goreh experienced at Cowley, partly at least on account of climate and in-different health.

(2) After this he was always known as "Father Goreh". Life p.214

(3) Life, p.321 ff.

(4) e.g. in the tract Do I truly and honestly believe in the Doctrines of the Church of England? (Poona 1884, pp.100)

(5) e.g. in the pamphlet The Real Presence (Allahabad 1888, pp.15)

(6) Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati, 1858-1922. The best biography is Nicol Macnicol: Pandita Ramabai (SCM, 1926). See also M.L.B.Fuller: The Triumph of an Indian Widow (New York, 1928).

(7) Stribodh Niti

Keshub Chunder Sen⁽¹⁾ and other reformers led her to become a member of the Prarthna Samaj in Poona. Here she came in contact with the Wantage Sisters, to whose community she went on her visit to England in 1884. There her interest in Christianity grew, but her keen mind had still many intellectual doubts, and it was a long letter from Goreh which resolved these and led her to receive baptism, convincing her that the position of the Samaj was untenable, and that only in Christ could she find certainty. She and Goreh had first met in Poona in 1882. Many years later in her Testimony she pays tribute to his help, telling first of how he visited her in Poona, explaining the difference between the Hindu and Christian religions,⁽²⁾ and then how, in England, her heart

"was drawn to the religion of Christ. I was intellectually convinced of its truth on reading a book by Father Goreh, and was baptized in the Church of England in the latter part of 1883, while living with the Sisters at Wantage."⁽³⁾

At this time she wrote to a friend:

"You will be glad to know that I have become a catechumen. Fr. Goreh preached to me from India. His humble, sweet voice has pierced my heart. Oh what a mighty power of preaching he has! I think no one would have had the power of turning my heart from the Brahman religion but Fr. Goreh."⁽⁴⁾

Later, during her stay in America from 1886-1889, Ramabai made many friends among the Unitarians, and for a time her beliefs ran in that direction. Once again Goreh came to the rescue, and his booklet Proofs of the Divinity of our Lord, stated in a letter to a Friend, published in 1887, was in origin a letter to Ramabai.

In 1892 Ramabai underwent a further spiritual experience through the ministry of the American evangelist Dr. Pentecost, and in later years she tended to look back on this as her real conversion, while the period of her baptism marked only her intellectual conviction of the truth of the Christian faith.⁽⁵⁾ Yet Gardner is

(1) Ramabai: A Testimony. 5th edition Kedgaon n.d. p.10 (1st edn. 1917)

(2) ibid p.12

(3) ibid p.14

(4) Life of Goreh, p.275

(5) ibid p.277

right in saying that

"The original acceptance of Christian truth was the substantial conversion ... The later awakening could not have taken place without the previous dogmatic acceptance of Christ. The seed of grace had been sown in her heart and the truth of Christ had been brought home to her intellect. Without this, the stirring appeal of the American preacher would have had no material on which to act."⁽¹⁾

The issue at stake here is an important one. Some people may feel that apologetic work like Goreh's is unnecessary, and has no place in a young Church. Yet in fact Goreh's ministry - despite his own repeated disclaimers - was a successful one, and if Pandita Ramabai's intellectual difficulties had not been resolved she would probably never have become a Christian. At certain stages of the life of the Church and of the individual a Clement is needed more than a Wesley, though both have ultimately their place.

Goreh's rational arguments were not always successful, and the touching story of his life-long efforts to win his younger brother for Christ shows his weakness as well as his strength. His brother found difficulty in reconciling God's foreknowledge with man's freewill, while Goreh, as a Christian, felt that there was no problem. He paid repeated visits, and wrote endless letters, all to no avail. He seemed to think that if this one intellectual difficulty were overcome, all his brother's doubts would be resolved. In R.M. Benson's penetrating words, "He wanted to prove to others what he believed himself."⁽²⁾ He himself saw so clearly, and was so open to reason, that he found it hard to understand why others could not always follow him.

Despite his real saintliness, and his effective ministry, his doubts and scruples tormented him to the end, and made him wish to resign from the Society, though the understanding of his superior, R.M. Benson, prevented him from taking this step. The discipline of long periods of prayer and meditation, and of the

(1) *ibid.* p.278

(2) *Life*, p.389

regular saying of the office did not suit his Eastern type of spirituality.⁽¹⁾
Benson wisely freed him from the obligation of obedience to his superior, leaving him freedom to serve God in his own way.⁽²⁾

His theological doubts were radical enough, and came on him especially in periods of rest from his active life. His biographer writes:

"Inconceivably painful were the occasional temptations to doubt the most elementary articles of the faith, and the clearest evidences of God's working in his own soul. They were the assaults of the evil one, through which he bravely persevered, but as they arose they seemed to crush him".⁽³⁾

Yet these were the doubts of a saint. Benson writes:

"He did not distrust God; he distrusted himself. Sore wrestlings with Satan could not be wanting to one who was so exceptionally called from Satan's tyranny to bear witness to the truth".⁽⁴⁾ "His scrupulosity was not so much a feeling, 'Oh, I do not believe', but rather 'I ought to be able to prove this to others, and if I cannot, my own faith in it cannot be trustworthy'.⁽⁵⁾

Goreh's health was never good, and as he grew older he grew steadily weaker, until he was more or less an invalid. He died in Bombay on 29th October, 1895.

We shall now turn to a consideration of his theology, as it is found in his Rational Refutation, and in the many booklets and pamphlets which he published. It should be remembered that practically all his works are written with an apologetic purpose, rather than with the intention of giving a systematic exposition of his own beliefs.

1. God, Creation and Revelation

(a) Reason and Revelation

We have seen how much importance Goreh attached to reason and to intell-

(1) Life p.298 ff; p.316

(2) Life p.317

(3) Life pp.298-9

(4) Life p.387

(5) Life p.389

ectual argument. This, however, by no means indicates that he gave a subordinate place to revelation. On the contrary, he frequently writes of the inadequacy of human reason to find or understand God, and of the absolute need for revelation, which was denied by the theists and rationalists towards whom he directed his apologetic. Always he begins from the standpoint of faith, and from there seeks by reason to remove objections and to show the rational validity of what he believes.

In the Rational Refutation, introducing his critique of the six traditional Hindu systems, he writes:

"It is evident how extremely difficult it is for men to arrive, by their own wisdom, at the true knowledge of God."⁽¹⁾

The Brahmos, similarly, depend on reason rather than revelation.⁽²⁾ Christians, however, turn to revelation, rather than to natural theology.

His approach, influenced as it is by Paley and Butler, is to accept the full Christian revelation, and then to point out the "evidences" which demonstrate that Christianity is of divine origin. These evidences are to be found above all in the miracles of Christ, including the resurrection, in the Old Testament prophecies, and in the "divine fruit" of Christianity as it is seen in transformed human lives.⁽³⁾ The evidences must of course be thoroughly tested by reason. Thus in his defence of the miracles Goreh turns first of all to a consideration of the genuineness of the Gospels, and gives a learned defence of their canonicity and trustworthiness, citing all the authorities, both ancient and modern.⁽⁴⁾

(1) RR 2

(2) RR 6 ff. Goreh is here referring to the Brahma Samaj before the influence of K.C. Sen began to be felt. In the early days, under Ram Mohan Roy's leadership, the Vedas were authoritative for the Samaj. After about 1845 "Nature" or reason became the norm. Finally, in the New Dispensation, Sen's own Intuition (adesh) took control.

(3) See the series of lectures Christianity not of Man but of God (Calcutta 1888) e.g. Lecture VI p.53 ff.

(4) See Lectures I and II in the same series (On the Genuineness of the Gospels).

His attack on the rationalism which would reject the miracles includes both Renan and the authors of Essays and Reviews, as well as Indian Theists. (1) The miracles, then, attested by witnesses of proven reliability, give further proof of the divinity and authority of Christ, and so indicate that Christianity, unlike Brahmoism, is not a religion devised by men, but a divine revelation. Against the Brahmos, who claimed to have reached theism without revelation, Christianity is shown as the true revelation from God, which ipso facto possesses an authority which the purely human and rational religion of the Brahmos must always lack. (2)

The Christian revelation demonstrates its excellence over against each of the major types of Hinduism, and Goreh uses rational arguments to indicate the "absurdity" of certain Hindu conceptions. Thus the advaita of Sankara errs in identifying the human soul with Brahman. Reformed theism can be clearly proved to be derived from Christianity. And the bhakti tradition is inseparably bound up with stories of immorality linked with the names of Krishna, Vithoba etc. (3) Against such a tradition, the loftiness and practicality of Christian morality proves that it is a divine revelation. He writes:

"The excellency of Christianity does not consist in its teaching many sublime doctrines of religion and several excellent precepts of morality, though in some of these even, Christianity will be found unique (4); but its excellence consists in its teaching prominently, perfectly, fully, consistently, clearly and decidedly what it concerns us to know for our belief and practice, and what is calculated to move, encourage, and comfort us in religion" (5).... "Christianity is not a production of man's natural reason, but is a direct revelation from God." (6)

(1) *ibid* pp. 14 f.

(2) *ibid* pp. 18, 19.

(3) *cp.* Four Lectures, delivered in substance to the Brahmos in Bombay and Poona (Bombay 1875). Lecture I, *passim*

(4) e.g. in the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo

(5) A Letter to the Brahmos from a converted Brahman of Benares (2nd Edition. Allahabad 1868) p.22

(6) *ibid* p.24

The acceptance of the doctrine of creation, and the light of the sort of natural theology which is accepted in Brahmoism takes us part of the way towards a knowledge of God. But such knowledge falls far short of the Christian revelation, which centres on God's Love shown in Christ. The particularity of the Christian revelation is, however, an offence to Brahmos.

"But why", he writes, "should any be offended at this act of God's Love, in giving His Only Begotten Son for the salvation of us, poor, miserable sinners? Is it because it appears so amazing, so inconceivable, so incredible? But, is not the very nature of God, and are not all His attributes so? And if some traces of such power and knowledge of God are to be found in His creation, what wonder if a most amazing instance of His love should be revealed in His Word, which neither His creation nor Brahmoism anywhere reveal? Why should not this desideration then be supplied by His revelation?"⁽¹⁾

Goreh thus holds the view, stemming from Aquinas, but in Goreh's time still widely held in Protestantism also, of the validity of natural theology, which requires however to be completed and perfected by the revelation in Christ. This revelation is the newness of Christianity, providing that certainty and completeness which Goreh sought in vain in orthodox as well as reformed Hinduism, and in the secular rationalism of the West. Though some "detached truths of theism" are to be found in Hindu books, yet theism as a system is not present there, and no one has ever crossed from orthodox Hinduism to theism except under the light of Christianity.⁽²⁾

(b) Creation, Causation and the Reality of Existence

Goreh lays great stress on the importance of the Christian doctrine of creatio ex nihilo, as he sees clearly that this is something quite new in India. All the Hindu systems deny the idea of creation from nothing. Sankara's advaita of course ultimately denies the reality of creation at all, though acknowledging that creation has taken place on the "practical" (vyavaharika) level. For each system sristi is really simply the giving of form to some substance or material cause which

(1) ibid p.53

(2) Christianity not of Man but of God pp.56-58

was already in existence. Thus in the Nyaya System the previously existing material cause is paramanu or the supreme atom; in the Samkhya System it is prakriti, the primordial substance, nature, "originant" or "evolvant"⁽¹⁾ to use Goreh's own preferred translation; while in Sankara's system creation is the product of maya, illusion.

"This notion of srishti being found universally in the Hindoo books wherever an occasion of a detailed description of it presents itself, and their learned men positively insisting in their books that every कार्ये * must have a समवायि or उपादान कारण + as well as निमित्तकारण #, it is most unreasonable to imagine that the doctrine of Almighty God's creating the world without a pre-existing material cause was ever known to the Hindoos".⁽²⁾

Thus all Hindu systems hold that the ultimate material cause of all effects is without a beginning,⁽³⁾ and that "the stream of the world has been flowing on from eternity"⁽⁴⁾, so that the world itself is in effect eternal. As against this, Goreh firmly holds the revealed Biblical Christian doctrine of creatio ex nihilo, which alone gives full sovereignty to God.

In an interesting section of the Rational Refutation Goreh investigates the Vedanta (advaita) theory of different types of existence, which is a matter vital to doctrine of creation. This is perhaps the most detailed and scholarly study of Vedantic epistemology which has ever been made by an Indian Christian theologian, and it is of very great significance. Unlike Brahmanabandhab forty years later, who attempted to use the concept of maya, freshly interpreted, to assist an alliance between Christianity and advaita, Goreh firmly rejects the advaita theory of knowledge and of creation, seeking to demonstrate its invalidity in a reductio ad absurdum. We shall attempt briefly to follow his argument, which is devoted to

(1) RR Preface.

(2) * karya: an effect.

+ samavayi or upadana karana: material cause.

nimita karana: this means both the agent and the instrumental cause.

(Goreh's footnote) - from A Letter to the Brahmos (Poona, 1879), p.9

(3) RR 40

(4) RR 41

proving the absurdity of believing that the created world is false, and that Brahman is all.

Advaita Vedanta posits three sorts of existence:

- (a) Paramarthika or true existence, which can be posited of Brahman only.
- (b) Vyavaharika or practical existence, which includes the world, human souls, and Isvara.
- (c) Pratibhasika or apparent existence.

The classical example which illustrates these types of existence is that of the snake and the rope. A man sees what he thinks to be a snake. On closer investigation, however, it turns out to be merely a rope. The snake, then, which for a time existed in his mind, has only apparent existence. The rope, an ordinary object of everyday experience, has practical existence. Yet the true advaitin knows that such practical existence is also illusory, and that ultimately the rope is not real either, for only Brahman exists. Nevertheless for the advaitin there is a sense in which there really is existence at each of these levels. This whole three-fold epistemology is designed to prove three things: that the world is illusory; that Brahman alone exists; and that the soul is Brahman.⁽¹⁾ Thus the world, souls, and even Isvara are granted only a limited kind of existence, which in fact is regarded as false, i.e. as existence which in fact is not, but, owing to mistake or ignorance (maya, avidya) seems to be.⁽²⁾ This is an important belief for advaitins, for

"however they may designate the world's existence, if they concede, that the world really exists, then Brahma does not remain without a second; and the consequence is duality."⁽³⁾

For the Vedantin there are not simply three modes of epistemology, or three different classes of objects. There are three separate kinds of existence. Thus Brahman must be described as "really real", while a rope, or a person, or God Himself,

(1) RR 156 f.

(2) RR 162

(3) *ibid.*

is "unreally real".⁽¹⁾ And it is only the Vedantin who can distinguish the real from the unreal, for to others, all seems real.

"The aim of the Vedantins is, to make out the world etc. to be veritable non-entities; for, this unestablished, even so is monism".⁽²⁾

For the benefit of lesser mortals, of course, the Vedantin works out a complete system of practical (vyavaharika) existence, and here

"we find an omniscient and omnipotent Isvara, framer and ruler of the external world"⁽³⁾

Here also we find a world evolved, not from prakriti as in the Nyaya system, but from maya. Yet this whole system, and so the whole of creation, and the personal God Himself, are ultimately unreal, and beyond them lies the real (paramarthika) level, where

"Brahma is true; the world is false; the soul is Brahma himself, and no other."⁽⁴⁾

The world's existence, then, is not its own, but Brahman's, and Brahman is its "illusory-material" cause.⁽⁵⁾ The world, in turn, is the vivarta, or "illusory effect" of Brahman, while, on the practical level, it may be described as the parinama, or evolution, of maya.

"Hence the Vedantins maintain, that the world is false; and, at the same time, that it is identical with Brahma, inasmuch as it is Brahma himself that, owing to ignorance, appears as the world."⁽⁶⁾

Goreh here has made his point of showing the inadequacy of the Vedantic view of the created world.

In a similar way he deals with the Vedantic doctrine of God. Only Brahman,

(1) RR 163

(2) RR 173

(3) RR 175

(4) ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन् मिथ्या जीवो ब्रह्मैव नाऽपरः ।

(5) RR 179

(6) RR 186

they hold, truly exists, and Brahman is ultimately nirguna, for saguna Brahman exists only on the practical level. Hence the creator God, the personal Isvara, is "unreally real", or rather false. It is only to be expected, then, that the monists should regard the Christian conception of God as inferior to their own:

"They suppose that we, at the best and furthest, stop short at Isvara, and make no approach to the pure Brahma beyond. But they do not consider, that such a supreme Spirit as they contend for cannot be proved to exist".⁽¹⁾

Goreh goes on to show that nirguna Brahman, for the very reason that he is void of qualities, reduces to zero, and so cannot be proved to exist.⁽²⁾ The traditional arguments for the existence of God, on which, following Paley, Goreh puts considerable weight, cannot apply to nirguna Brahman.

"Brahma is out of relation with the world; and how, then, can we arrive, by inference, at a conviction of his existence?"⁽³⁾

And again:

"A Being that is not the author of our being, nor the author, in any true sense, of the being of all other things from which we derive benefit to our souls and bodies, cannot be entitled to receive from us that degree of homage, love and gratitude which the true God is entitled to."⁽⁴⁾

Even the definition of Brahman as Saccidananda does not raise the deity above zero:

".... Their Brahma is only nominally intelligence and bliss. He is intelligence that cognizes nothing, and bliss without fruition of happiness. What hope is there that the soul would be happy, if it came to such a state as this?"⁽⁵⁾

(1) RR 197

(2) RR Chap.5 (Sect. III). It should be remembered that certain modern scholars, like de Smet, feel that Sankara has been distorted by his later followers, and that in fact nirguna Brahman, as Sankara himself understood it, can be "the most personal being". See, e.g., RV.de Smet, art. Categories of Indian Philosophy and Communication of the Gospel, in RS, Sept.1963, p.22

(3) RR 221

(4) A Letter to the Brahmos (Poona, 1879), p.11

(5) RR 274

Christians, however, who believe in a personal God who has created the world out of nothing can, he believes, prove the existence of the Creator, though not that of a Being (Brahman) who transcends Him. Our God is truly the world's Creator and Upholder, supporting it by his Divine Will⁽¹⁾, and in fact this Creator-God is the highest, than whom nothing higher can be proved. Isvara is really a higher conception than Brahman:

"It is the Supreme Brahma himself, imagined, by ignorance, as associated with illusion, as creating the world, and as endowed with the attributes of omniscience etc. that is Isvara."⁽²⁾

Thus the Vedantic outlook is seen to be vitiated by the ideas of nirguna Brahman and of maya. Maya, after all, is an ambiguous concept even for the advaitins. The world evolves from maya, and yet ultimately maya itself is false, so that it becomes impossible for the rational man to find a firm foothold anywhere in the advaita system.

"The tenet of the falseness of ignorance (maya, avidya) is the very key-stone of the Vedanta, and must never be lost from view for a single moment."⁽³⁾

A paragraph will illustrate clearly Goreh's logic as applied to the problem of maya. He writes:

"On hearing, that the Vedantins regard ignorance as the cause of the world's appearing to be true, one would, of course, suppose, that this ignorance was understood, by them, to be itself true. For if ignorance did not actually exist, how could the world, which they hold to be a nonentity, have appearance? When a man mistakingly sees a snake in a rope, the snake is called false. At the same time, that man's misapprehension is not said to be false, but true. The Vedantins, however, maintain that ignorance is false. We ought, therefore, to inquire, how it is reckoned false, and what is gained to the Vedanta system by so reckoning it."⁽⁴⁾

What depends on falseness must itself be false, and so the whole advaita view of the nature of God, of creation, and of our knowledge of them both, proves unusable.

(1) RR 201

(2) RR 202

(3) RR 193

(4) RR 347 (1911 edition)

Goreh states the Christian view of God and creation in very unambiguous words:-

"Why is God spoken of as supremely great? Because He created all, and regulates and governs all, and because He is omnipotent and omniscient, and endowed with divine attributes. Again, why is it proper for us, and incumbent on us, to honour and to love Him? Because He made us, and because we are His, and because He is our benefactor, and because, by reason of His adorable perfections, He claims the homage of our hearts. The religion which does not recognize in the Supreme the characteristics thus enumerated, does not really recognize God; and the worship which it teaches is not the worship of God. To devise a strange imagination, and to denominate it Brahma and Supreme Spirit, will in no wise benefit the Vedantins." (1)

We have hitherto concentrated on Goreh's treatment of the Vedantic doctrine of creation. His discussion of the Nyaya-Vaisesika teaching is also worth noticing, particularly because of its bearing on the "Soul-Body Analogy" of Ramanuja, which plays an important part in the theology of A.J. Appasamy. (2) According to these two schools atoms (anu) are the material cause of the world, and so the soul, and atoms, are held to be equally eternal with God. (3) The relation of the world to God may then be expressed by describing the world as the body of God, i.e. it is not identical with Brahman, and yet there is no dualism. Unlike Appasamy, Goreh is not prepared to use this soul-body analogy as a possible way of describing God's relation to the created world. He writes:

"Terrene and other atoms are not of the body of God, He being bodiless... Thus, the body influences the soul; but you cannot affirm, that God is affected by terrene atoms, etc., in the same manner.... Therefore, if you give the name of God's body to these atoms, still our bodies cannot be adduced as analogous to them" (4)

(1) RR 275

(2) v. infra pp. 297 ff; 345 ff., with comment on Br. Ar. Up. 3, 7, 8-20

(3) RR 109

(4) RR 111, 112. P.D. Devanandan points out that the early followers of Sankara perceived this weakness in Ramanuja's analogy. "How could we conceive of changes in prakriti being confined to it and not as, in any way, affecting the unity of Brahma's Being, they pointedly asked." P.D. Devanandan: Doctrine of Maya, p.149

This is a very clear-headed critique of the analogy. Goreh is anxious to prove that the only possible relation is the unambiguous one of Creator to creature.

(c) The Nature of God

We have already seen how Goreh maintains that God is saguna rather than nir-guna. He is the personal, Creator God. Accepting the Bible as the primary source of our knowledge of God, Goreh defends the personal conception of God found in the Old Testament against the charge of anthropomorphism, and lays great stress on God's justice and his holiness - qualities on which the testimony of Hinduism is often ambiguous. God must be personal if we are to know Him:

"The boldest instances of anthropomorphism of the Bible display the greatest beauty and excellence, and an exhibition of the most condescending love of God."⁽¹⁾ "... Abhorrence and hatred of sin is not a bad quality; it is rather the essential character of holiness; though when we apply those terms to the Deity we must exclude whatever of human imperfections is in them."⁽²⁾

God is holy, and demands holiness from men. The natural man, including even the devout Hindu bhakta finds this holiness hard to understand:

"He cannot perceive, for instance, the utter incompatibility of God's holiness with His performing unholy and immoral acts, and thus the books of the Hindus, as well as the Musalmans, actually ascribing to God unholy and immoral acts, do teach in reality that He is unholy, though they call Him holy in name."

It is interesting that Goreh singles out his own Marathi bhakti-poet Tukaram for censure in this connection, for Tukaram is one of those in whom many Christians have seen a high manifestation of "India's Religion of Grace",⁽⁴⁾ and Narayan Vaman Tilak was to speak of coming to Christ "over the bridge of Tukaram's verse".⁽⁵⁾ Goreh's condemnation, however, is very severe, and he criticizes an account of Tukaram by a British scholar, Sir Alex Grant, for being too sympathetic.⁽⁶⁾ He

(1) A Letter to the Brahmos (Allahabad, 1868), p.60

(2) ibid. p.116

(3) ibid. p.3

(4) R. Otto's phrase.

(5) Quoted in J.C. Winslow: Narayan Vaman Tilak, p.56

(6) Letter to Brahmos (1868) p.14 f.

writes:

"It would be a great mistake indeed, if by reading the above specimen from Tukaram, one was to imagine any comparison to exist between the teaching of Tukaram and that of the Holy Bible Who is the God towards whom Tukaram exhibits so intense a devotion? It is Vithoba of Pandharpur, who is the same with Krishna, the supposed incarnation of Vishnu, whose most immoral deeds are celebrated in the Bhagvata."⁽¹⁾

Elsewhere he is even more explicit. Tukaram

"in his devotional songs, called Abhangas, repeats over and over again the immoral stories of Krishna, related in the Bhagvata. Tukaram mentions Krishna's lustful sportings with the Gopis, his stealings, his telling lies, etc. He says plainly that the Gopis committed adultery with God, and calls their adultery blessed! To his mind these things were not unworthy of God!"⁽²⁾

This was, of course, a stock argument of all the missionary apologists and evangelists of the period, and it is interesting to see Goreh, with his Marathi background, and his special study of Tukaram, accepting it in full, with no attempt to allegorize.

Equally with his holiness, Goreh stresses God's justice as against the Brahmos and others who concentrated on God's love, which thus was turned into indulgence. In his tract on Eternal Punishment he insists that when God punishes us the punishment is not simply "remedial"; it is rather the inevitable outcome of His justice. God rewards virtue and punishes vice. "If God did not do this, He would not be just".⁽³⁾ The love is certainly there, but it can never be divorced from justice:

"Who can put any bounds to His love and say that thus and thus far only He can love? Is God like man? Nay, even as He is infinite and incomprehensible, so is His love; only it must be in agreement with His infinite Justice as well as Holiness".⁽⁴⁾

Thus we see Goreh, with detailed inside knowledge and relentless logic, criticizing the doctrines of God and of creation of the classical Hindu systems, of

(1) *ibid.* p.20

(2) Christianity not of Man but of God (1888) p.28

(3) RR 144.

(4) Letter to Brahmos (1868) p.54

bhakti, and of reformed theism. His is perhaps the strongest and most competent statement of the negative attitude to Hinduism which we shall find in an Indian Christian theologian. And yet his own approach and method is, in its way, as thoroughly Indian as those whom he criticizes.

(2) The Doctrine of Man and of Sin

(a) Atman and Paramatman

According to the orthodox systems of Hinduism, the soul of man (atman) is eternal,⁽¹⁾ and is in reality identical with the Supreme Soul (paramatman). Looking at the creation on the practical level, it is held that

"God made the world in order to requite the good and evil deeds of souls",⁽²⁾ that is, God brings the world into existence as the instrument of karma, rather than creating both it and men out of his sheer free will and good pleasure. Goreh contrasts the Christian explanation of the reason for creation, as he understands it:

"By reason of one of the perfections of His nature, goodness, He was pleased to make manifest, through the medium of creation, His supremely lovable and wondrous attributes",⁽³⁾

and this purpose is achieved

"by creating souls and by making them rejoice in the contemplation of His perfections."⁽⁴⁾

The Christian view of the soul as being created by God for fellowship with Him is in direct contrast to the Hindu teaching that on the "practical" level the soul has existed as soul from eternity, and yet is ultimately identical (on the "true" level) with Brahman.⁽⁵⁾ Goreh writes:

(1) "All souls and all primary elements have existed quite independently of him /God/ from all eternity" (Letter to Brahmas 1875, p.10).

(2) RR 113

(3) *ibid.*

(4) RR 114.

(5) RR 192.

"It is a maxim of the Vedanta, that 'The soul is Brahma itself, and nothing other'. Now, I would ask the Vedantins, can this be? For they assert, that, on the one hand, soul errs by reason of ignorance; and that, on the other hand, Brahma is, in essence, ever pure, intelligent, and free, and can never for a moment be otherwise. Still, they maintain, that the soul is Brahma; and, with interest to reconcile their contradiction, they resort to the most elaborate mystification." (1)

Here we see a typical example of Goreh's method of "rational refutation", and indeed the argument is hard to answer, except by an ingenious explanation of ignorance" (maya), and there again Goreh would be ready to trap the unwary!

(b) The Image of God

In a paragraph of the Rational Refutation Goreh, without using the term "image" gives a clear description of his understanding of the conception. He writes:

"God created man a moral creature; capable of knowing God, and his own relations to God and the world; and capable of honouring and of loving God, his Creator and Lord, and of discharging his duties towards his fellow-creatures. And this capacity also he possesses, of knowing, that to do these things is right, and that to do the reverse is wrong." (2)

(c) Sin

This immediately leads us to the knowledge of good and evil, and the nature of sin. Hinduism here fails to draw a clear distinction. From the point of view of karma, virtue as well as vice is a cause of bondage, (3) and so the Hindu systems tend to lose the distinction between the two, and to advise release from all works, whether good or evil. (4)

"Sin and virtue are acknowledged, indeed, from the standing point of practical existence; but, nevertheless, they come to be, in truth, nothing". (5)

While orthodox Hinduism reduces sin to zero, the Theism of the Brahmo Samaj

(1) RR p.33. (Sect. III, Chap. VII, 3rd Edit. 1911)

(2) RR 143.

(3) RR 144.

(4) It must be borne in mind that Goreh is writing in 1860, long before Vivekananda and Gandhi had reinterpreted the meaning of work and service.

(5) RR 275.

is little better. It regards sin as a sort of natural evil, like disease, which can be healed by remedial treatment. Writing to the Brahmos, Goreh says:

"You have turned sin from being a moral evil into a mere natural evil, from being an act of wickedness and deserving detestation, into a disease deserving kindness".(1)

Goreh's own understanding of sin goes deeper than perhaps any other Indian theologian, in the sense that there is no under-estimation of the positive, evil power behind it, and that he sees it to have its roots in the corruption of man's whole nature. Commenting on the counsel of the Nyaya and Vaisesika Systems, that man should abandon all works, whether evil or good, he writes:

"But, alas! so corrupt in the nature of man, that, let him reflect however much, yet he cannot, on that account, abandon bad works entirely. Your solicitude to shun good works is quite superfluous; for, so corrupt is the nature of man, that, let his works be ever so good, still there cleaves to them much of evil and imperfection; and he is incapable of a single good work wrought with purity of body, speech and heart.... In the sight of God, who knows everything without and within, these very works are tainted with evil".(2)

The fact that Christianity recognizes the reality and seriousness of sin and evil, and provides a means to overcome them, is, for Goreh, an overwhelming proof of its effectiveness. He makes this point towards the end of the Rational Refutation:

Man "wants, then, a religion to instruct him in the knowledge of God, and to lead him to worship and honour Him; and to show the exceeding heinousness of sin, and its terrible consequences, and how, by repentance and prayer, to free himself from its fetters. That religion from which we learn these things must be, we feel, from God. And, for philosophers - themselves corrupt, as being human - to exhort their fellow-men, in contrariety to the teaching of that religion, to regard God as false, to think themselves one with Brahma, and to count sin, and virtue, and their fruits, nonentities, is to administer to a sick man poison, not medicine. Cease, I entreat you, my beloved countrymen, to consider as true a religion which contains such things as these."(3)

There can be no glossing over the consequences of sin. Man is responsible for

(1) The Brahmos: their Idea of Sin: its Nature and Punishment. (Poona, 1882) p.11

(2) RR 141

(3) RR 277

his own sin, and justice - God's justice which is the complement of his mercy - demands that there should be punishment. Goreh criticizes the writer of a Brahmo Samaj pamphlet - possibly Keshub Chunder Sen himself⁽¹⁾ - who considers punishment as purely remedial, rather than as retributive. "The writer of that pamphlet", he says, "has simply turned God's justice into His mercy".⁽²⁾

"Those unhappy beings who by the power of that liberty of choice with which every mortal agent is endowed, have made themselves proof against the influences of Divine Mercy, and incapable of turning towards God and virtue, cannot but remain subject to the punishment due to their ever-enduring wickedness for ever and ever."⁽³⁾

(d) The Body and Suffering

Rejecting the Hindu doctrine of creation, Goreh also rejects the idea that the body is evil. When one thinks of his own very frugal and ascetic life it is pleasant to find him challenging those who hold that the body is evil:

"On the contrary, not a little happiness is derived by means of it.... the doctrine, therefore, of the pandits, that to abide in the body is intrinsically misery, is in every wise erroneous."⁽⁴⁾

What then of pain and suffering? Is it simply to be regarded as the working out of karma, the penalty for sins committed in a previous existence? Goreh rejects the idea, giving instead his understanding of the Christian position: all men are sinners, even the "good"; full and final judgment comes only after death, not during this life; God sometimes sends us suffering as a warning that we should turn to Him; we can learn and grow through suffering; not all suffering is the fruit of sin, for a corn of wheat must first suffer and die if it is to yield fruit; and we cannot yet see the end, or know God's purpose behind our sufferings.⁽⁵⁾

(1) The Brahmos: Their Idea of Sin, p.2 ff. See also On Objections against the Catholic Doctrine of Eternal Punishment, Calcutta, 1868.

(2) *ibid.* p.4.

(3) On Objections.... p.16.

(4) RR 126, 127.

(5) RR 130 ff.

(3) The Doctrine of the Person of Christ

In considering Goreh's Christology it is useful to follow his own experience, which he later shared with Pandita Ramabai and with others who had doubts about the divinity of Christ.⁽¹⁾ Goreh confesses that these intellectual doubts kept recurring even after he became a Christian. His difficulty - a natural one for all Hindus interested in Christianity - was as follows:

- (a) If Christ is divine, how can He possibly be separate from God, a separate "Person", in Fact?
- (b) If Christ is a distinct "Person" - and the Gospels would seem to indicate that He is - how can He still be God?

Strangely enough, Goreh found his way through this difficulty by commencing with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, rather than with Christology. For him it was easier to think of the Spirit as a separate Person, who is yet one with God, than to think thus, in the first place, of Christ. And so, from his own spiritual pilgrimage he gives this advice:

"By considering the passages of Holy Scripture about the Holy Spirit... you will more easily see that there is a plurality of Persons in the Divine Substance, and when you are convinced of this you will see that we must acknowledge the Divinity of the Second Person."⁽²⁾

His argument here is closely based on Scripture, and hinges on the analogy expressed in 2 Cor. 2; 11:

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

Goreh comments:

"As our spirits are not something separate from ourselves, so the Spirit of God - that is the Holy Spirit, is not something separate from God".⁽³⁾

Thus the Holy Spirit, who is not created, is the Spirit of God, and so is

(1) See Proofs of the Divinity of our Lord (Bombay, 1887), passim.

(2) Proofs p.2

(3) ibid.

substantially one with God.⁽¹⁾ And yet, though substantially one, the Spirit is a distinct Person. Here Goreh relies on John 14; 16, 17, 26 etc.,⁽²⁾ and writes:

"The Holy Spirit is most plainly set forth in Holy Scripture as a distinct "Person" or "Purusha" or "Vyakti" from the Father... substantially One, but personally distinct."⁽³⁾

He supports his argument with reference to the use of the masculine Greek pronoun

ἐκεῖνος and the masculine noun πρῶτος and goes on to demonstrate the truth of the Athanasian Creed, as applied to the Spirit. Only then, after establishing the Spirit as "substantially One yet personally distinct" from the Father, does he turn to consider the divinity of Christ.

He begins by pointing out that Christ comes, in order, between the Father and the Spirit, so that He too must be divine, especially as He is in some sense (though not in substance) "superior" to the Spirit, who proceeds from the Son as well as the Father.⁽⁴⁾

The argument gains additional strength from John 1; 1, καὶ Θεὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ λόγου, which Goreh interprets according to the literal meaning of the Greek - "and the Word was God"⁽⁵⁾ If the Spirit is God, and yet distinct from the Father, so must Christ, the Word, be:

"If, then, the Holy Spirit, though a distinct Person, is yet God, what reason have we (said I) for saying that the Word could not be God because He is a distinct Person from the Father?"⁽⁶⁾

(1) *ibid.* p.3

(2) e.g. "... He shall give you another Comforter" v.16, etc.

(3) *ibid.* p.3.

(4) The Filioque is accepted without question.

(5) He points out that had the definite article been included (ὁ Θεός) the distinction of Persons would have been placed in doubt. Goreh is anxious when possible to take the plainest and most obvious interpretation of the text, e.g. here and in his exposition of "this is my body". v. *infra* p.132.

(6) *ibid.* p.15. Goreh starts from the Gospels, where Christ is clearly an individual Person, so that his distinction from the Father does not have to be proved.

As we have seen, Goreh was a student of Paley, and found in the miracles of Christ, and above all in the Resurrection, compelling "evidences" of the divinity of Christ, as well as of the divine origin of Christianity. His "rational" method here consists in a detailed and learned investigation of the evidence for the reliability of the miracles, a task which shows how deeply he had studied the original texts, the background history, the canon, and the Fathers.⁽¹⁾ He comes to the conclusion, after a full review of the evidence, that the documents are reliable, and so prove beyond doubt the miracles and the Resurrection.

"These facts", he writes, alluding to his investigation, "remove all possibility of illusion in the matter. And that being removed, the truth of the miracle of Christ's resurrection is proved."⁽²⁾

He is quite sure that the argument from the authenticity of Scripture overrides any disproof on grounds of probability:

"Though miracles may be called improbable in the abstract, yet they are not incredible on that account; if satisfactory proof can be shown for their occurrence we must believe in them."⁽³⁾

The Christian faith centres on the Resurrection:

"The Resurrection of Christ is the most essential point in Christianity", he writes; "without it it is nothing."⁽⁴⁾

And the sure proof of that Resurrection is in the apostles' own eyes: they really believed that they had seen the Risen Christ; and it was on the foundation of that faith that the Christian Church grew.⁽⁵⁾ In conscious opposition to Renan, who had discounted the Resurrection as "fancies and dreams" he lists the Resurrection appearances, discusses the discrepancies in the accounts, etc., in order to make his point

(1) He examines in detail the evidence of (a) the contemporaries of the Apostles and evangelists; (b) their immediate successors; (c) the heretical writers; (d) the Apocryphal Gospels. (Christianity not of Man but of God (1888), Lectures I and II)

(2) Four Lectures (1875) p.84

(3) Christianity not of Man p.7

(4) *ibid.* p.39.

(5) *ibid.* p.41.

"by historical evidence",⁽¹⁾ and he refers doubtful readers to Paley.⁽²⁾

Having demonstrated the divinity of Christ, Goreh does not consider it necessary to prove his humanity, as that, he feels, is sufficiently clear. He writes:

"I have proved that He is God, and no proof is necessary to show you that He is Man. Though God, He assumed Human Nature - Human Soul and Human Body - and became MAN. He did not assume a human body alone. For He felt hunger, thirst, pain etc., which the body alone cannot feel. Therefore the Creed says, "PERFECT GOD AND PERFECT MAN; OF A REASONABLE SOUL AND HUMAN FLESH SUBSISTING."⁽³⁾

He then proceeds to expound the Athanasian Creed, which he fully accepts.

The subordination of the Son to the Father is accepted in an orthodox sense, and used to attack the Unitarians and Brahmos towards whom he is directing his apologetic in this pamphlet. Unitarians are accustomed to use the text - beloved also of Ram Mohan Roy, as we have seen⁽⁴⁾ - "My Father is greater than I" (John 14, 28). Goreh sensibly argues, "Had Christ been a mere creature, could it have been worthwhile to tell us that God was greater than He?"⁽⁵⁾ Christ is equal to the Father in Nature, in Divinity, and in perfection of substance. Yet He is indeed subordinate (a) in his origin, as being begotten of the Father, and (b) because of his humbling of Himself. (Phil. 2)

It is a fascinating spectacle to watch Goreh's apologetic on a point like this: he sticks closely to orthodoxy, and yet one is conscious all the time that this is no mere academic exercise, but real apologetic with real antagonists, the reformed Hindu "Theists" of the 19th Century.

Goreh's fullest Christological statement comes in a footnote in his tract On Objections against the Catholic Doctrine of Eternal Punishment⁽⁶⁾ It is a very

(1) *ibid.* p.44.

(2) Paley, Evidences, Pt. II, Chap. 8.

(3) Proofs of the Divinity of Our Lord p.31

(4) *v. supra* p.38.

(5) Proofs p.51. He deals with several other "subordinationist" texts.

(6) Calcutta, 1868. Footnote on p.96, where he is discussing the Catholic doctrine of the Virgin Mary. There are indications that his guide here

clear statement of Chalcedonian orthodoxy:

"The Son of God in becoming Incarnate did not join Himself to a human person distinct from Himself; but assumed Himself a Human Nature. By the mysterious working of His Power He Himself has become thenceforth a Person of two Natures, the one, His eternal, unchangeable, Divine Nature, the other that which He has newly assumed, i.e. the Human Nature. It is however His own Human Nature; it is His own Self; so that it can truly be said that God became Man.

The two Natures, the Divine and the Human, are not, of course, changed, or converted, one into the substance of the other, as the great Athanasian Creed teaches. But by virtue of God's taking upon Himself the Human Nature, they are so closely and mysteriously united together that both together make up one Person, of our Redeemer, the God-Man".

(4) The Doctrine of the Work of Christ

Goreh's numerous writings contain much less material than one would expect on the Cross and the Atonement. While he gives a detailed treatment of creation, of the Divinity of Christ, of sin and of eternal punishment, there is no corresponding treatment of the Atonement. It is in his sacramental teaching that we find the fullest exposition, and it is clear that, as his theological position developed, he came to think of the benefits of the Work of Christ as being conveyed normally and indeed almost exclusively, through the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist.

(a) Salvation and jnana in Hinduism

In the Rational Refutation Goreh points out the inadequacies of the Hindu conception of salvation, a dogma which is common to all the systems. Man's soul, it is held, is in bondage to ignorance (maya, avidya), because the soul has come to identify itself with the mind, the senses and the body. To engage in either evil or good work is a sign of this bondage. Salvation (moksa, mukti) is emancipation from this bondage, and such emancipation can be secured only through "right apprehension" (jnana)-

"To free oneself from the fetters of both virtue and vice, right apprehension is the sole remedy." (1)

may be Bp. Pearson.

It is interesting to see that Goreh notes with approval in this context the use by Dr. Mill in his Sanskrit poem Khrista-sangita of the Sanskrit term ईशप्रसू (Isaprasu) as a translation of Θεοτόκος .

(1) RR 25.

"Right apprehension" is defined as

"the recognition, by the soul, of itself as distinct from the mind, the senses, the body and all else," (1)

and it is to be obtained by the study of the Sastras and with the help of "preceptors".
Such study and instruction leads a man to the "immediate cognition of his own soul". (2)

Emancipation or salvation, then, is something negative rather than positive.
It "is simply immunity from misery, and is not a source of any happiness whatsoever." (3)

The realization that the soul is separate from the body leads on to the realization of its identity with the Supreme Soul or Brahman. But even this identity - especially in the Nyaya and Vaisesvika systems - is largely without content: it is simply, he writes,

"to lose the faculties of apprehension, will, and all manifestations of sensibility, and to become like a stone," (4)

and

"the attainment of a state of insensibility is not true emancipation." (5)

His verdict on the efficacy of the Hindu type of salvation to deal with man's real problems is expressed as follows:-

"The issue of the whole matter is, that it is vain to hope for salvation on the score of knowing the body to be not identical with the soul; for this knowledge cannot avail to save a man from evil works, or from their penalty." (6)

(b) True jnana

The Christian conception of true knowledge or jnana is very different from this:

(1) *ibid* p.

(2) RR 28.

(3) RR 34.

(4) RR 152.

(5) RR 146.

(6) RR 148.

"The sort of right apprehension which I maintain to be beneficial is this: rightly to apprehend God, and oneself, and one's wretchedness, and the way of escape from it, and what man ought to do, and what he ought to forbear."(1)

Such jnana, however, is beyond the power of man to attain by his own efforts, and comes only as the gift of God's grace:

"Be assured, that no man will be saved by right apprehension, or by works, but only by the free grace of God, the means of obtaining which are indicated in the real word of God".(2).... "I cannot concur with the partizans of the Systems, in regarding right apprehension as the chief cause of emancipation; my own belief being, that this effect springs from the spontaneous grace of God".(3)

And God has provided a Way of Salvation through His Grace:

"But God, in compassion for us sinners, has revealed His Word, and has thereby marked out a way, by following which, all our sins will be pardoned, and that reward, by His mercy, will be bestowed upon us, which would have attached to virtue, had virtue been practicable to us. Then will our fallen nature be purged and purified; the ability to practise virtue will be vouchsafed to us; and we shall abide near to God, and dwell in the realms of joy, and enjoy everlasting beatitude."(4)

"We have all become corrupt, through sin, and our works are unworthy of God's acceptance. Our well-being is, therefore, wholly dependent upon the grace of God. By our works we merit only Hell; but, since God is merciful, He desires to save us by His free grace. In order that we may secure this grace, He has contrived a wondrous plan, giving proof of His illimitable and ineffable compassionateness, and altogether in harmony with His justice and holiness. And, since He has opened, on our behalf, the treasury of His boundless mercies, will He make our highest happiness to consist in being conformed to the condition of a stone?"(5)

(c) Union with Christ

This "wondrous plan" of God is carried out through Christ's Incarnation, who was humbled in order that we might be exalted in union with Him:

(1) RR 108.

(2) RR 142.

(3) RR 108.

(4) RR 147.

(5) RR 154.

"the doctrine that God, out of His amazing love to man, made Himself so low as to become Man, by assuming our nature, and opened the way for uniting man to His Humanity, through the sacraments, and, through His Humanity, to unite man even to His Divine Nature,* and to exalt him thus to a height so great as to surpass conception, and to communicate to him divine righteousness and holiness - this doctrine, I say, is calculated to sanctify and to elevate our souls in such a way as mere Theism knows nothing of."(1)

In this passage, published in 1887, we see Goreh's later view that the benefits of Christ's Passion are to be appropriated primarily through the sacrament of Holy Communion. And indeed it is in an exposition of the eucharist that we find the fullest and most impressive statement on this subject, and we can gain some idea of the deep and meaningful place which the sacraments held in his own devotional life.

"In the Holy Eucharist, to those who, by the Grace of God believe, the insignificant light of the senses is overpowered by and lost in the Divine light of faith; as the light of the twinkling stars is lost in the glorious light of the sun; and so they perceive not what the senses tell them; they hear not their voice there; they only see what faith shows them; they only behold the Lamb of God, sacrificed for us once of all on Calvary, who comes, we know not how, with his fresh wounds and with His precious Blood overflowing to drown and annihilate our sins therein, in His amazing Love, to meet us, to be received by us, to dwell in us, yea, to unite us with Himself, and through Himself with the Father. He, as the Father in His Godhead having taken our flesh, and giving that very flesh to us in the Holy Eucharist, and thus uniting us with Himself even in nature through that flesh, though not personally, (we still remain distinct in person from Him) but mystically (therefore the Church is wont to call herself His mystical Body) yet really and truly, and thus through Himself unites us to the Father, yea, makes us "partakers", as the Scripture says, "of the Divine Nature". O Glorious Gift! O Amazing Love! May we, the sons of India, say, that the unity with God, Whom our fathers delighted to call 'Sat Chit Ananda Brahman', after which they ardently aspired, but in a wrong sense, for in that sense a creature can never be united with the Creator, yet after which they ardently aspired, God has granted us their children to realize in the right sense? Was that aspiration and longing, though misunderstood by them, a presentiment of the future Gift? I indeed have often delighted to think so."(2)

This is a magnificent and moving passage, showing, as it does, the benefits of Christ's Passion, and the mystical way in which we are by grace united with Him,

* Not in the way that the Vedanta teaches, for that is impossible (Goreh's footnote)

(1) Proofs p.36.

(2) On Objections against the Catholic Doctrine of Eternal Punishment (1868) p.41-42.

and so pointing to the true fulfilment of these deep longings for union with God which are found in Hinduism. The Work of Christ brings us God's gifts of "Pardon, Regeneration and Adoption",⁽¹⁾ and these are for all who accept Christ:

"I can say positively, that God has provided Salvation for all through the Merit of the Life, Death and Resurrection of His only Begotten and Incarnate Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. I can say positively, because God has revealed it, that He conveys that Salvation to us through the means of the Sacraments."⁽²⁾

In contrasting this Christian conception of God's active yet suffering Love with Hindu ideas of God, Goreh uses the language of "purchased Salvation" and of vicarious suffering. The Christian revelation, disclosed in the Bible, provides a man with

"assurance of the unchangeable love of his God towards him, as well as with the hope of everlasting life, not to be procured by his own righteousness... but procured by the Righteousness of his Saviour who has purchased Salvation for him, by His Life, Death and Resurrection; and not only so, but Who, when a man surrenders himself to Him, works His own Righteousness in him, by His indwelling in him, and by the almighty power of His grace."⁽³⁾

And so, in replying to Brahmo arguments alleging injustice in God's allowing His Son to bear the penalty of human sin, he writes:

It is not unjust in God "if instead of demanding 'the blood' of a sinner, that is, instead of punishing him God condescends to take upon Himself the nature of men and becoming their surety sheds His own blood; that is, takes the punishment upon Himself".⁽⁴⁾

In another passage he tells of how men are

"powerfully drawn towards God and virtue by the indescribably amazing Love of God set forth in Christianity, in His so loving the world as to give

(1) *ibid* p. 31.

(2) *ibid* p. 101.

(3) Letters to the Brahmos (1868) p.58

(4) Objections against.... Eternal Punishment, 1868 p.118. Goreh was very careful not to go beyond Scripture in the statement of any doctrine. His friend Dr. W. Hooper of the CMS relates how he once (between 1862 and 1864) preached in Goreh's presence a Good Friday sermon on I Peter 2; 24, in which he "used some expressions of the vicarious nature of our Lord's death which perhaps went beyond what had direct scriptural authority". Goreh afterwards expressed his disapproval. (Life p.146)

His only Begotten Son, that He, though the possessor of everlasting bliss (anandrupa) and the King of kings, yet should become man for the sake of man, His most rebellious creature, and in His unbounded compassion be a sufferer for him, a sufferer of sorrow and unspeakable pain."(1)

(d) Faith

Holding the sacramental views which he did, it is not surprising that Goreh says little about justification by faith. He felt that much contemporary theology (of the evangelical school?) overstressed the subjective side of religious experience, while he is determined rather to concentrate on the objective gifts bestowed in the sacraments. He writes,

"the modern school of theology teaches us to build everything on our own subjective state of feeling."(2)

Yet he does give a brief but interesting statement on the nature of faith (visvas):

"You know that our forefathers attached a very great value to bhava or visvas, that is, faith. But their fault was that they mistook superstition for faith, that is, they believed in things for believing in which there was no solid ground. Let us reject what was faulty in them, but let us retain what was good. Let us be men of great faith. Let us believe with firm and unshaken faith the things which God has revealed, and let not our poor fallible reason tempt us to doubt them, because it is not able to grasp them."(3)

(5) The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

We have already, in the section on Christology, noted Goreh's teaching on the nature of the Holy Spirit, and have seen how - perhaps because of the Hindu identification of Brahman with the Supreme Spirit, Paramatman - he found it much easier in his own experience to accept the divinity and yet separate Personality of the Spirit than of Christ. There is no need here to recapitulate the material.(4)

(1) Letter to Brahmos (1868) p.52

(2) Life p.116

(3) Christianity not of Man but of God (1888) p.76

(4) v. supra pp. 116 ff.

(6) The Doctrine of the Trinity

Goreh simply accepts the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity as it is found in the Athanasian Creed, in which he takes especial delight!⁽¹⁾ As we have seen, he reaches this position by accepting the divinity and distinct personality first of the Spirit, and second of Christ. Both Spirit and Son are "substantially One" with the Father, but "personally distinct".⁽²⁾

We must remember, of course, that Goreh is writing before the days when the words "person" and "personality" acquired the psychological content which they hold to-day. There is, he says, "a plurality of Persons in the Divine Substance".⁽³⁾ He realizes, as everyone must, the inadequacy of the terms at our disposal, especially the word "person" with its implication of "a separate individual". The Sanskrit words vyakti (individual) and purusa (person) are open to similar objections.⁽⁴⁾ Yet we must use some words, and these seem to be the only possible ones for expressing what is a mystery.

Though Goreh does occasionally mention the Hindu conception of saccidananda,⁽⁵⁾ he does not appear to have used it for an exposition of the Trinity, as did Keshub Chunder Sen, and later Brahmabandhab. He does, however, allude to the Hindu trimurti,⁽⁶⁾ not indeed as a "type" of the Trinity, but as a sort of praeparatio for the Christian doctrine:

"The doctrine of the Trimurti may be said to have prepared us to receive the doctrine of the Holy Trinity - at least in this way, that, when we hear of it, we find it to be somewhat like a doctrine with which we were previously quite familiar."⁽⁷⁾

(1) Proofs p.32. He published a four-page pamphlet entitled A Native Priest on the Athanasian Creed (n.d. but probably 1882), in which he defends the Creed against Rationalists, Deists, Unitarians and Brahmos.

(2) ibid p.3.

(3) ibid p.2.

(4) ibid p.1. But v. infra p.600 for the possibilities of purusa.

(5) v. supra pp. 107, 123.

(6) The triad of Brahmā (Creator), Viṣṇu (Preserver) and Śiva (Destroyer).

(7) Proofs p.78

(7) The Doctrine of Scripture

Goreh had been a Hindu sastri⁽¹⁾ and pandit, and even before his baptism became deeply versed in the Christian Scripture, to which he was devoted. In Hinduism all the Systems accept the Vedas "as unquestionable authority",⁽²⁾ that is as the divine sruti, given by God; while the Puranas, the work of the seers or rishis, are regarded as smriti - what is "remembered" rather than "heard" - and are treated as "warrants"⁽³⁾ for religious practice. Goreh contrasts the Hindu Scriptures with the Bible, and exhorts his Hindu readers to turn there:

"The true religion is now accessible to the people of India. May God, in His infinite mercy, grant, my dear countrymen, that you quench not the divine light which He has lighted in your breasts; that, on the contrary, you may follow its leading; that you meekly and patiently try, by it, the Christian Scriptures; that you take hold on their priceless promises; and that, in the end, you may inherit, as your everlasting portion, the joy of the Heavenly kingdom".⁽⁴⁾

For him the Christian Scriptures now have the "unquestionable authority", while the works of the Fathers provide additional "warrant". He believes that there is no inconsistency in using the Fathers to assist in the interpretation of Scripture and writes:

"We indeed go to Scripture; and when we bring the sayings of the Fathers, we do not do so to contradict Scripture; but to contradict the ten thousand false comments of men put upon the words of Scripture."⁽⁵⁾

The Bible, he holds, is inspired, authentic and reliable in all its parts. We have already seen something of his scholarly defence of the authenticity of the Gospels, whose integrity is vital to prove the miracles and resurrection of Christ.⁽⁶⁾

(1) Lit. One learned in the Scriptures (Sastra)

(2) RR 42.

(3) ibid.

(4) RR 280 (This is the concluding paragraph of the book).

(5) On Objections.... p.58

(6) v. supra p.118. The first two lectures in the Series Christianity not of Man but of God (1888) are entitled On the Genuineness of the Gospels.

The Old Testament is equally regarded as authentic and inspired, and many of the events it records are seen as types of the New Testament.⁽¹⁾ So too the history of Israel is regarded as proof of special Divine Providence, and the Old Testament prophecies with their fulfilment in Christ are classed among the "evidences" of the divine origin of the faith.⁽²⁾ These are facts which

"seem all designed to prepare a people to receive the perfect light which, in the fulness of time, Christ was to bring into the world",⁽³⁾

and so indicate the "divine origin of the Old Testament".⁽⁴⁾

Fallible men have been the instruments through whom the Bible has come to be written, and their part is vital. Yet the whole Bible indicates the inspiration and "design" of God:

"Is all this the result of a fortunate accident? Or is there some one Designer, wiser than the wisest in the world, who, present in all times, inspired the different writers of the Bible, with a supernatural wisdom and with one design?"⁽⁵⁾

"I allow that these men have used their reason, their peculiarity of style etc., yet the Spirit of God so over-ruled and used their reason and all their individual peculiarities, as to accomplish His own purposes through them."⁽⁶⁾

In interpreting doubtful passages of Scripture, Goreh attempts to use as his principle the acceptance of the clear and unambiguous sense of the words, as we have seen in his discussion of John 1. 1, "the Word was God".⁽⁷⁾ Similarly when expounding Matt. 26. 26, "this is my Body", he takes the words in a literal rather than figurative sense, rejecting the possibility of interpreting them as parallel to sayings like "I am the Vine" etc., which are to be taken as parables.⁽⁸⁾

(1) Letter to Brahmos (1868) p.58

(2) *ibid.* p. 59.

(3) *ibid.* p.

(4) *ibid.*

(5) *ibid.* p. 61

(6) Letter to the Brahmos (1879) p.77

(7) *v. supra* p. 117.

(8) The Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Sacrament, proved from Scripture and Apostolic Tradition (1888) p.3

(8) Eschatology

For Hinduism, eschatology is synonymous with transmigration (karma and samsara) and this teaching Goreh unequivocally rejects. (1) The Hindu argument is that the rejection of the doctrine of karma implies partiality in God, as the punishment does not fit the crime with the inevitability of the karma theory. Goreh's answer here is perhaps not very satisfactory: God is supreme, and makes souls diverse from each other, not equal. "There is no injustice, then, in giving less to one and more to another". (2) He is on firmer ground when he gives, for his Hindu readers, a picture of the Christian belief about the last things:

"But we, for our parts, who possess the true Word of God, learn, from it, that such as accept the terms of salvation which God has offered, and become participants in His grace, will be translated, after death, to the abodes of bliss, and that God will so purify their nature, that they shall never more be affected with evil desires, envy, enmity, pride and such like. To them will be given, in Heaven, celestial and indefectible bodies; and they will retain all the mental characteristics of conscious beings, and will be for ever blest with the beatific vision, and with the highest joy, ineffable and divine, in being near to Him, and in paying Him adoration, and, - their nature being made pure, - with serenity of soul, and with peace; - their happiness always increasing, and subject to no intermission". (3)

Goreh seems to devote a disproportionate amount of his writing to the doctrine of eternal punishment, on which he wrote a tract of 126 pages. Yet there is an explanation: for it was strangely enough, this doctrine which first drew him to Christianity. (4) Some people, he explains, are drawn to Christianity by the love of God seen on the Cross, and others by the thought of the fearfulness of sin. But for himself -

"It was the doctrine of everlasting punishment, which shook my soul from the very bottom, and forced me to come away, at any cost, from the path of error, and resolve in my mind to strive with all my might to leave off sin and follow holiness and virtue." (5)

(1) RR 127

(2) RR 128

(3) RR 152. He is here contrasting the Christian "beatific vision" with the Nyaya-Vaisesika conception of mukti as total unconsciousness.

(4) Letter to Brahmos (1868) p.52

(5) *ibid.*

His exposition of the necessity for eternal punishment is developed, as we have seen⁽¹⁾, in opposition to an anonymous Brahmo tract (probably by Keshub Chunder Sen) entitled "Atonement and Salvation", in which the author holds that (a) we deserve punishment for our sins, but that (b) God punishes us for our welfare. Goreh feels that this underestimates God's justice: sin is no "illness" deserving a remedial medicine. It is moral wrong, which must suffer the just consequences, and so men who have

"made themselves proof against the influence of Divine Mercy, and incapable of turning towards God and virtue, cannot but remain subject to the punishment due to their ever-enduring wickedness for ever and ever."⁽²⁾

In his own tract, Goreh is led from this statement of the nature of justice and punishment to an exposition of God's love, and of the way of Salvation, and of the benefits of Christ's Passion mediated to us in the eucharist. For this is the road which he himself travelled. He was, indeed, a rather "fearful saint", but his fears did lead to salvation, even though they kept recurring in moments of weakness all through his life.

(9) The Church and Sacraments

Unlike most Indian Christian theologians, Goreh was a staunch Churchman, whose Churchmanship grew steadily "higher", especially after his meeting with Dr. Kay of Bishop's College in 1857. Thus he had already reached a fairly "Catholic" position when he published the Hindi Rational Refutation in 1860, though he did not sever his connection with the CMS till 1867, nor join the Cowley Fathers till 1876. Some of his eulogies of "our dear Church of England" and attacks on "Dissenters" read rather strangely in the India of today!

There is perhaps no need to give his ecclesiology in detail, as it closely

(1) v. supra p. 115.

(2) Objections p. 16

follows the Tractarian pattern in all matters of Church order. He is equally critical of "Dissenters" and of Roman Catholics, at one time refusing to sit on the Hindi Bible Revision Committee with "Dissenters"⁽¹⁾, and again deeply concerned and grieved at the "going over" to Rome of his Anglican friend Luke Rivington.⁽²⁾ He deeply appreciated the liturgical and ascetic tradition of the Tractarians, and contrasted it with that "Protestantism" which "has taught us that it is not necessary to rise early and to praise and worship God before everything else."⁽³⁾

The Church and its tradition, expressed in the Creeds, the Fathers, and the Anglican Prayer-book is for him the only true guardian of the faith:

"The Holy Catholic Church, the mystical Body of our dear Lord, the abode of His Blessed Spirit, is the only keeper and infallible expounder of Christianity".⁽⁴⁾

A good deal of his writing is taken up with defending "Catholic" practices, which he had found both helpful and necessary in his own devotional life.⁽⁵⁾ He quotes frequently from early Anglican divines like Crammer, Andrewes, etc., as well as from contemporary Tractarians like Pusey, and is thoroughly at home in the controversies of his time over orders, ritual, etc. We shall, however, confine our more detailed examination to a single point - his understanding of the Eucharist. We have already seen how it is in this connection that he gives his finest exposition of the Atonement.⁽⁶⁾

His letter on "The Real Presence", which was published in 1888, is a clear exposition of the Anglican position as he understands it. He begins, as we have

(1) Life, p.290

(2) ibid. pp.369-371

(3) ibid. p.249

(4) Objections p.91

(5) Confession, for example, brought him a sense of release and joy which he had never experienced in his evangelical days. Life p.116

(6) v. supra p.123.

seen above ⁽¹⁾ with an exposition of the words of Matt. 26. 26, "this is my Body", which he interprets in their natural, non-figurative sense. He explains:

"There is some stupendous mystery in these words. What He held in His Hand was indeed bread physically, yet it was, in some mysterious and ineffable way, His Body."⁽²⁾

Men try to rationalize the mystery, for example by the Roman theory of transubstantiation, but without success. The mystery cannot be explained. The best approach, he feels, is that which uses terms such as "sacrament", "inward and outward part", "sign", "thing signified", as in the Anglican Catechism. When Christ said "This is my Body" -

"the bread which He held in His Hand was no longer mere bread (as the Fathers say) but became a sacrament (or Eucharist, as St. Irenaeus expresses it) containing two parts, an outward part, and an inward part ... The outward part was bread, the inward part was His Body."⁽³⁾

The bread, then, is

"His Body, as regards the inward part, yet remaining still bread as regards the outward part. This outward part is a figure or a "sign" of the inward part, 'the thing signified', which is 'the Body of Christ'".⁽⁴⁾

Goreh is here affirming the "real presence", though not at all in the sense implied by transubstantiation. Christ's Body is in Heaven according to the "natural mode of existence", but "is present in the sacrament in a supernatural, mysterious, ineffable manner."⁽⁵⁾

His "rational refutation" of transubstantiation is clear and interesting, and is primarily philosophical: "it is impossible that accidents could remain without the substance," he writes.⁽⁶⁾ He continues:

(1) v. supra p. 218.

(2) The Real Presence p.5.

(3) ibid. p.9.

(4) ibid.

(5) ibid. p.10

(6) ibid. p.7. He equates substance and accident with the Sanskrit terms dravya and guna.

"For the Fathers say that the Sacrament, that is the outward part of the Sacrament, which are bread and wine, by transmutation nourished our blood and flesh, that is the material parts are changed into the substance of the human body."⁽¹⁾

This, however, would be impossible if by the consecration nothing remained of the elements of bread and wine. Goreh supports his view here with a review of the Biblical evidence, and then of the Fathers, especially Ignatius, Justin and Irenaeus.⁽²⁾

There is no doubt that of all the Indian Theologians, Goreh is the most Church-centred, as he is also the most orthodox. We shall see, however, that his attitude to the Hinduism he had left is not one of total rejection and antagonism, and that there were many features of Western Church life - even of Anglo-Catholicism - which he felt to be alien to Indian Christianity.

(10) Goreh's Attitude to Hinduism

(a) Partners in Dialogue

Goreh's theological writing has a special strength and vitality derived from the fact that most of it is addressed to non-Christian readers. While a good many Christian theologians, in India as well as in the West, have written primarily for Christians, Goreh is a true apologist, seeking always to present the Christian faith with a rational cogency which will win over his Hindu partners in dialogue.⁽³⁾ So it was that R.M. Benson compared him, not unfairly, to Justin Martyr, Clement and Augustine.⁽⁴⁾ He writes always with courtesy, sympathy and understanding, for he himself had grown up as an orthodox Hindu, and all his relations, with whom he constantly kept in touch, belonged to that world. The many debates and public disputations which he held with members of the Brahma Samaj in Calcutta, Bombay and Poona,

(1) ibid.

(2) ibid. p.11

(3) "He did not write it [The Rational Refutation] for Europeans; but as a Sastri for Sastri and others learned in Hinduism". Life p.118

(4) Life: Preface viii

were always conducted in a spirit of courtesy, and appealed to the enlightened intelligence of his Hindu friends.

And yet there is no doubt that his attitude to Hinduism was primarily critical. He did not seek to use the philosophies of Sankara or Ramanuja in the service of Christ, as did Brahmabandhab and Appasamy in later years. He did not see Christianity simply as "the Crown of Hinduism" as did Farquhar. True, he did see points in Hinduism which gave hints of the coming glory of the Christian faith, but his call to his Hindu fellow-countrymen was to turn away from Hinduism, in all its forms, and turn instead to Christ. He himself had come to Christ by a difficult road, and he knew that this step could be taken only with much suffering and loss. But he was convinced that the acceptance of Christ carried with it the responsibility of full participation in the Christian Church and joyful acceptance of the historic traditions of the Church.

In his dialogue, Goreh is waging the apologetic battle on a number of different fronts, and it is most interesting to see how he brings different arguments to bear on each. As a result we see different facets of the Christian faith being illuminated in turn by the light of this dialogue with different kinds of Hinduism.⁽¹⁾ We shall briefly consider his approach to different types of Hinduism.

(i) Orthodoxy

Goreh himself came from the orthodox tradition, and before his conversion had written a Sanskrit treatise defending orthodoxy against the attack of Muir's Matapariksha. After his conversion his first and most famous book, the Rational Refutation, is a detailed critique of the six orthodox systems, and above all of the strongest and most popular, the Vedanta.

His attack concentrates, as we have seen, on a limited number of points. The

(1) One is reminded in a way of the later attempt by P. Johannis to "reconstruct" Christian theology using materials from Sankara, Ramanuja, etc. v.infra p.235.

Vedantic postulation of different types of existence takes all reality from man and the world, and makes nonsense of our life and experience. If all is maya, then life has no meaning. And if God is simply Brahman or Paramatman, with which ultimately everything is identical, then Brahman becomes a null, and life and religion are meaningless. For Goreh, as for so many of his educated Hindu contemporaries, the word "Theism", associated with the Reform movement inaugurated by Ram Mohan Roy, had great attractions. But the Vedanta, he concluded, could not be classified as Theism, for its God was no true God. He writes:

"The distinctive article of Theism is, the belief in a God: but God is eliminated from the Vedanta. Its Brahma is neither creator of the world, nor its preserver, nor its Lord: in short, the world is out of relation to him. Let the Vedantins give to such an object the title of Brahma, or that of Supreme Spirit; still their doing so does not make them Theists."⁽¹⁾

Goreh had given full acceptance to the Christian beliefs that God is personal, that the world and man are created by Him, and are real, and that salvation consists in forgiveness from sin and loving fellowship with God. On each of these points the Vedanta was totally inadequate, and so failed totally to meet the real needs of men.

(ii) Reformed Theism

In the years following the publication of the Rational Refutation, Goreh's apologetic was directed more and more to the adherents of the Brahma Samaj, and their counterparts in Western India, the Prarthna Samaj. He felt that they had advanced a long way from Hindu orthodoxy, and yet had not come far enough, or had taken a wrong turning. Under the influence of English education - an influence which, on the whole, Goreh felt to be pernicious, as tending to Rationalism⁽²⁾ - the Brahmos had

(1) RR 275

(2) Goreh writes: "At first, when young men in India began to receive an English education, especially in Mission schools, where Christianity is taught, many of them were drawn towards Christianity. They saw the falsehood and absurdity of Hinduism, and the beauty of Christianity, and especially through the study of the Evidences, were led to believe in Christianity and embraced it.

/In this

deserted polytheism and monism for the lofty theism of the Vedas. From there they had gone on to accept "Nature" or reason as their guiding light. In the later days of Sen they turned to new and strange forms of theism. Goreh felt that it should be possible to make a "rational" appeal on behalf of Christianity to men of such open minds - but the task proved an unrewarding one.

We have already seen the type of syllogistic argument which he frequently uses in his apologetic directed to the Brahmos.⁽¹⁾ He was convinced that the theism of the Brahmos was purely derivative, and owed everything to Christianity. No theism of that type had existed in India until the time of Ram Mohan Roy: why then could not the Brahmos see that, if Christianity was the source of their theism, they should accept it in whole, and not merely in the parts that suited them? They accepted the fact that God has created the universe, and the fact that the soul is distinct from God. Why then could they not accept the full Biblical revelation? He writes:

"Brahmoism, which contains a great deal of pure and enlightened religion, has made its appearance only under the light of Christianity, and has been taught and professed, at first, only by those men, whether in America, or in England, or in Calcutta, who have been educated in the School of Christianity". "Is it not clear," he asks, "that it is altogether borrowed from Christianity?"⁽²⁾

Unfortunately, however, the Brahmos did not show much inclination to accept Christianity as the source of their "enlightenment", and tended more and more to accept reason as their guiding light, as against the Christian idea of revelation. Goreh describes them as tending

In this way Dr Duff, and others, made many converts in Calcutta, Madras, etc. But now, the English education seems to have an opposite effect. Those who receive it become rationalistic.... The increase of unbelief in England, and the books published by unbelievers of every shade in English, have a great influence upon the educated man in India. I must tell you that it is now very difficult indeed to convert an educated (i.e. English-educated) man."
Life p.374,5. (undated, but probably, from context, c.1894)

(1) v. supra p.94.

(2) Letters to the Brahmos (1868) p.2

"not to be satisfied with the amount of evidence which Christianity has to prove its divine origin; to assert positively that miracles are impossible, that God cannot give a Revelation, and that God can never become incarnate; to be unwilling to believe mysteries which our reason cannot comprehend." (1)

This devotion to reason rather than Revelation (the fruit, he feels, of Western scepticism and rationalism of the type of J.S. Mill, then so popular in India), will, he is convinced, lead finally away from all theism to thorough-going scepticism. He exhorts his Brahmo readers:

"You may be quite sure, my dear friends, that if you have no authoritative voice of divine Revelation to guide and support you, but have your reason alone to help you, you cannot stop long in any such so-called religion as Brahmoism, but will be driven at last into utter irreligion, whatever its name may be, Agnosticism, Atheism, Positivism or anything else." (2)

Goreh's apologetic method of public disputations and lectures was not notably successful among the Brahmos. And yet it did have its effect, above all in the case of Pandita Ramabai, who began as an orthodox Hindu, then progressed to the Brahma Samaj, under the influence of her husband, and of Keshub Chunder Sen and others, and from there, through the life and witness of many Christians in India and England, and with the apologetic and intellectual help of Goreh, took the final step of baptism. (3)

(iii) The Bhakti tradition

Goreh, with his Marathi family connections, made a special study of Tukaram, the great bhakti poet of Maharashtra. But though in his pre-Christian days he had turned from the Saivite tradition to that of the Vaisnavas with their teaching on the divine avataras, and though he felt that this belief in incarnation was a praeparatio for the Christian faith (4), he could find little to attract him in the bhakti tradi-

(1) Letter to the Brahmos (1868) p.2.

(2) ibid p.67.

(3) Others too have taken the step from Brahmoism to Christianity (e.g. Manilal C. Parekh, v. infra p.467), but on the whole Reformed Hinduism has not proved a stepping-stone to Christ. To-day (1965) the Brahma Samaj and Prarthna Samaj have declined almost to insignificance, while the Arya Samaj, with its much more positive and traditional Hinduism, is of very great influence.

(4) v. infra p.141.

tion, and never attempts, as Appasamy was to do, to adapt it as a vehicle for a Christian bhakti marga. He felt strongly that the character of Krishna took away the positive value of the avatara - conception by divorcing incarnation from morality, and did not seriously consider the allegorizing interpretation which became common under the influence of Christianity.

Indeed, Goreh's attitude to the bhakti saints like Tukaram in Maharashtra and Chaitanya in Bengal, and even to reformers like Guru Nanak, is a negative one. They did not, in fact, reform Hinduism, he felt, as they did not bring in any substantially new elements. The same old worship of Krishna persisted in them, and they were, to him, no more "enlightened" than traditional popular Hinduism, although the Brahmos - especially the New Dispensation under Keshub Chunder Sen - tended to look to them as prophets and "great men". Goreh thought of them as "Revivalists" rather than as Reformers:

"They revived bhakti, that is, ardent devotion, not to the true God of whom they were ignorant, but to Krishna, Rama, etc., whom they, like all Hindus, ignorantly believed to be God."⁽¹⁾

(iv) The Arya Samaj

The Arya Samaj, founded in 1875 by Dayanand Sarasvati, is, as we shall see⁽²⁾ a reformed Hindu Society which has abolished idol-worship and caste, and draws its inspiration, not from Christianity or rationalism, but from the Vedas, to which Dayanand directed his followers' attention in order to eliminate what he believed to be the corruption of later Hinduism. The Arya Samaj has grown and spread, and is a very powerful force to-day. Goreh, however, was as critical of it as it was of Christianity. He felt that Dayanand's exegesis of the Vedas was not merely faulty

(1) Christianity not of Man but of God p.32

(2) v. infra p. 163.

but dishonest, and read into them much that in fact could not be found there. He writes:-

"By the preaching of Christianity and the spread of Christian education, there are now to be found men everywhere in India who are dissatisfied with Hinduism, its superstitions, its foolish stories, etc. Dayanand Sarasvati told such men that the Hinduism which is now practised, is not the true Hinduism, nor the religion of the Aryas. 'The religion taught in the ancient books, the Vedas, was the true religion of the Aryas, and that is very pure. It teaches only the worship of the one true God, etc.' But in this he told a falsehood. He put altogether a false interpretation on the words of the Vedas."⁽¹⁾

Goreh's aim in his apologetic here was to demonstrate that the Vedas in fact teach polytheism, not monotheism, and that therefore it is useless to turn to them in search of a higher theism. He did this by indicating the true nature of the Vedic religion as he saw it, and by exposing the errors of Dayanand's method of exegesis.

(b) Præparatio Evangelii in Hinduism

Thus we see that Goreh's "dialogue" with Hinduism was very largely a negative, critical one, and that his penetratingly logical mind evolved a special form of apologetic or even polemic for each of the different traditions. Yet it would be a great mistake to imagine that he was simply a "Westernized" Indian Christian, denationalized and out of sympathy with his own cultural tradition. The reverse is true. No one could ever have called him Westernized. He refused to adopt Western dress - even clerical dress⁽²⁾ - and always lived a life of utmost simplicity and asceticism, in the radical Indian sense, keeping only as much of his salary as was essential for his minimum requirements. Quite early in his Christian life he hoped to live in an ascetic brotherhood,⁽³⁾ and was attracted to the Cowley Fathers because they were the first Christians he had met who approached the Indian ideal of the ascetic life. Even with them he became critical of certain "Western" features of devotional life,

(1) Life, p.323.

(2) Life, p.151.

(3) Life, p. 88, 134.

while he had the greatest aversion to what he regarded as the unnecessary luxury and "Western-ness" of many European Christians and missionaries. Like Keshub Chunder Sen, he attached importance to the fact that Christianity was in its origins Asian not European, and urged his countrymen to accept it as such. He writes:

"No one should call it a foreign religion, and yet if any people have a greater right to call it theirs than other people they are the Asiatics."⁽¹⁾

He was a saint, and his saintliness was much more typical of the East than of the West. He was also, as we have seen, a severe critic of the rationalism and scepticism which seemed to be the most characteristic Western influence then at work in Indian Society.

He loved his Hindu fellow-countrymen, felt at home in their society, and was convinced that, in some unknown way, God had been preparing their hearts and minds to receive the Christian revelation. Indeed he came to the conclusion that a genuine orthodox Hindu was more open to the Gospel than the more sophisticated Brahmo or Rationalist, who had been thoroughly Westernized and secularized. He writes:

"But a genuine Hindu is rather prepared to receive the teaching of Christianity ... Providence has certainly prepared us, the Hindus, to receive Christianity, in a way in which, it seems to me, no other nation - excepting the Jews, of course - has been prepared. Most erroneous as is the teaching of such books as the Bhagvadgita, the Bhagvata etc., yet they have taught us something of अनन्यभक्ति ⁽²⁾ (undivided devotedness to God), of वैराग्य ⁽³⁾ (giving up the world), of नम्रता ⁽⁴⁾ (humility) of क्षमा ⁽⁵⁾ (forbearance), etc., which enables us to appreciate the precepts of Christianity."⁽⁶⁾

This is an interesting, and even moving, sentence, for Goreh, using the pronoun "us", here ranges himself alongside his Hindu brothers,⁽⁷⁾ and the four qualities he refers

(1) Christianity not of Man but of God, p.59

(2) ananyabhakti. Compare Mark Sunder Rao's Ananyatva v. infra pp.550 ff.

(3) vairagya.

(4) namrata.

(5) ksama.

(6) Proofs, p.75

(7) He elsewhere uses the phrase "to us genuine Hindu Christians", Proofs P.78

to are ones which he had himself learnt from Hinduism, and which helped to make him the true Christian saint he was. They are indeed distinguishing marks of the best Indian Christianity.

He goes on to point out that there are certain ideas in Hinduism which are not found in Rationalism, and which point beyond themselves to their fulfilment in Christ. Such ideas are the conception of miracles, and above all of Incarnation. These conceptions can and should be regarded as a praeparatio evangelii. He testifies to his own experience:

"I gave up the Hindu religion because I came to see that it was not a Religion given by God. The errors of it I condemn. But I never found fault in idea with its teaching that God becomes Incarnate. Indeed, many stories of Krishna and Rama, whom the Hindu religion teaches to be incarnations of God, used to be very affecting to us.⁽¹⁾ ... Even in the midst of errors and absurdities, there are found right notions of God, and sentiments remarkably resembling those of Christianity. They may be looked upon as presentiments of what God was afterwards to reveal to us by His Revelation. And thus our countrymen have been prepared, to some extent, to appreciate and accept the truths of Christianity".⁽²⁾

In an interesting passage, dealing particularly with the Hindu understanding of incarnation, he is able to quote Tertullian on his side, and indeed his own negative approach has perhaps more in common with Tertullian than with the more accommodating Clement, despite Benson's comparison. One can see, in this passage, his deep devotion to his Hindu forbears and all that was best in their tradition. He writes:

"But is it not rather the truth that all false religions, which deserve the name of religion at all, contain many glorious truths, taught, or at least, commended, by natural reason? And Christianity which is the purest form of natural religion (though it is also more than natural religion) does not reject what is true in those false religions, but rather purifies, improves, and retains it."⁽³⁾

In this paragraph, written as early as 1868, we catch a hint, albeit a trifle grudging, of what was to develop into Farquhar's "Crown of Hinduism" approach. On

(1) Proofs p.76.

(2) ibid. p.77 (footnote)

(3) On Objections... (1868), p.81

the same page there occurs the following very interesting footnote on the Incarnation:

"Our dear Fathers have believed in the doctrine of Almighty God's becoming incarnate out of compassion to mankind, and found in that fact a rich source of most affecting thoughts, about God's most tender and condescending Love, for meditation and devotion, and drew excellent moral lessons from it; though, unhappily, mixed, which is a sure mark of religions invented by man, a good deal, with impurities and follies... Even Tertullian, the general detractor of heathen poets and philosophers says, "Christo enim servabatur omnia retro occulta nudare, dubitata dirigere, praelibata supplere, praedicata representare, mortuorum certe resurrectionem non modo per semetipsum verum etiam in semetipso probare."

"It was reserved for Christ to unfold the hidden secrets of past ages, to solve all their doubts, to give in full reality that of which man had a shadowy foretaste, to represent actually and in fact that which had been dreamed of by anticipation." (Tert. de Resurrectione Carnis).

"Tertullian speaks of the Resurrection. His teaching is equally true of the Incarnation, of which there was a dim mysterious expectation among the nobler minds of antiquity. He [i.e. Christ] showed the meanings of those anticipations and gave the answer to those doubtings, and satisfied those yearnings and shadowy foretastes of truth, which expressed themselves in the imaginary incarnations dreamed of by poets and philosophers. He proved the truth of the anticipations, not only by his preaching, but also by his history. He was and is substantially and in fact all that they had dreamed and infinitely more."⁽¹⁾

Christ is here clearly indicated as the fulfilment of the longings of Hinduism. We have already seen how Goreh saw in the Christian's faith-union with Christ, experienced in the eucharist, the fulfilment of the ancient Hindu longing for union with Brahman as saccidananda⁽²⁾. God has not left Himself without witnesses in Hinduism, and He has placed in the hearts of His Hindu people that "divine light" which can guide them to the truth.

"May God, in His infinite mercy, grant, my dear countrymen, that you quench not the divine light which He has lighted in your breasts; that, on the contrary, you may follow its leading; that you meekly and patiently try, by it, the Christian Scriptures; that you take hold on their priceless promises; and that, in the end, you may inherit, as your everlasting portion, the joy of the Heavenly Kingdom"⁽³⁾

(1) *ibid.* p.81 (footnote).

(2) *v. supra* p. 123.

(3) RR 280, (peroration).

The "divine light" to which he refers is no doubt, for him, reason, and it was to reason that he turned for help in his greatest work. Yet he urged the use of reason to look beyond itself to Revelation, and to see, in the best traditions of Hinduism, many pointers towards the True Light which shines only in Christ.

A GARLAND AT THE FEET OF CHRIST: THE CHRISTIAN BHAKTI POETS

1. The Bhakti Tradition in Hinduism

There has been a tendency, in the West no less than in the East, to regard the pure monism of Sankara as the typical form of Indian religious philosophy. We have seen this tendency at times in the Brahma Samaj. Later we shall see how Sri Ramakrishnan went through the whole gamut of bhakti personal devotion, but that his final religious experience was closer to monism. And in modern times Dr. Radhakrishnan has given his own interpretation of Indian philosophy, an interpretation which is ultimately a thorough-going monistic one. The impression has thus become prevalent, both in India and abroad, that the pure Vedantic monism of Sankara is the highest form of Indian religion and philosophy, and that any form of dualism, or modified non-dualism, is in some way inferior to that view which annuls all differentiation between the absolute Brahma and the individual soul.

Yet, in fact, as we shall have reason to notice repeatedly in the following pages, there is an opposite tendency in Indian religion and philosophy, one which equally claims to derive from the inspired Vedas, the tendency which is seen in that bhakti-religion, which Otto defined as

"faith in salvation through an eternal God and through a saving fellowship with Him."⁽¹⁾

This tendency has probably never been absent from Indian religion. Despite the efforts of Swami Dayananda to prove the essential monism of the Vedas, it is clear that there is in them the idea of worship of personal gods. In later times, along with the development towards non-dualism, there is also the tendency to postulate one personal God, Isvara, behind all forms of incarnations, a God who can be loved and worshipped, and who remains distinct from the worshipper, a God who can be approached with feelings of deep love and personal devotion.

(1) Otto, Christianity and the Indian Religion of Grace p. 13

For a modern attempt to assert the superiority of the personalist over the impersonalist tradition in Hinduism, see R.C. Zaehner, At Sundry Times Chap. III

The earliest extensive teaching of this doctrine is to be found in the Bhagavadgita, though indeed many different points of view are represented in this devotional classic, and Dr. Radhakrishnan tends to interpret it in a monist way.⁽¹⁾ Yet it is clear that the bhakti tradition here seen centred in personal devotion to Krishna as the Incarnation of Vismu, is a dominant one.

Later, in about the tenth century A.D., an emotional type of bhakti-literature developed, in the Bhagavata Puranas. Here the theme of personal devotion to the God of one's choice (ista deva) is developed, at times in a sensual and even sexual direction. The reaction from the monism of Sankara is very clear. To this period belongs the great Vaisnava reform movement in the Tamil country, instituted chiefly through inspired singers and poets known as the Alvars, who composed devout bhakti-songs.⁽²⁾

But the one who gave solid theological content to this movement, and indeed carried out a true reformation in Hinduism, was Ramamuja, who flourished about 1100 A.D.⁽³⁾ Living in his youth at Kanchipuram, he was at first an adherent of Sankara's advaita, but under the influence of the Vaisnavism of the Alvars became the leader of a new and different school, which sought to give a solid theological and philosophical basis to the bhakti-tradition which was already in flourishing existence.

"The essential contribution of Ramamuja to Indian thought was the effort to develop in a complete system, in opposition to the uncompromising Advaitism of Sankara, a philosophical basis for the doctrine of devotion to God which was presented in poetical form in the hymns (prabandhas) of the Alvars."⁽⁴⁾

(1) Radhakrishnan: The Bhagavadgita.

(2) Otto, op. cit. p. 21

(3) A. Berriedale Keith, (ERE) gives date of birth 1016 or 1017. Otto gives 1055. The latter date is more probable.

(4) Art. on Ramanuja in ERE

For Ramanuja the impersonal nirguna Brahman of Sankara was a useless God.
The longing which he shared with the bhakti poets was for

"salvation through personal fellowship with a personal, supramundane, a loved and adored God, who saves and redeems."⁽¹⁾

Ramanuja mounts a blistering attack on Sankara:

"If a man who longs for salvation must say to himself that as saved he will not exist any more as himself, then he is sure to decline to have anything to do with such a salvation. The whole doctrine of salvation - which even the opponents are longing for - would thus be meaningless."⁽²⁾

He builds up his own system, postulating a God-Isvara - who has attributes. He is related to the world as the soul is to the body,⁽³⁾ but it is not a relation of identity, and so a personal relationship is possible between God and men. Hence comes the name of Ramanuja's system, i.e. Visistadvaita, or modified non-dualism.

In answer to the question "What must I do to be saved?" bhakti rejects the jnana-marga of the advaitins. Similarly karma marga is rejected, for although the Gita, for example, recognises that good works must be performed, yet their performance cannot guarantee salvation:

"The only way to salvation is bhakti: the hearty confidence in the saving God and His prasada, His Grace, as it is expressed in some verses, which we here quote (from Vishnu-Narayana, p. 43):

Say, how is salvation reached? It is not reached
By human pains or meditation,
It is a work 'without aim' (desire of merit), whose aim
is not found in human achievements.
To loosen your heart from the ban of the world cannot
be done by any work of penitence, nor any meditation,
By Hari's grace alone can it be done, unmerited."⁽⁴⁾

Two further features of the bhakti teaching may be noted as they are relevant to some leading Christian conceptions, and especially to some controversies of the Reformation.

(a) Prapatti

Ramanuja's teaching concentrates on the need for bhakti alone, that is "faith permeated by love and expressed in adoration."⁽⁵⁾

(1) Otto, op. cit. p.23

(2) Ramanuja, quoted by Otto, op.cit. p.28.

(3) v. infra pp.348 ff.

(4) Otto, op. cit. p.40.

(5) Otto, op.cit. p. 41.

Yet even bhakti can become a "work", and a man, according to Ramanuja, must depend on God's "grace" (prasada) alone. So, in the place of bhakti a new conception, that of prapatti⁽¹⁾ or complete self-surrender, is introduced;

"Man is not even capable of faith and love. Only one thing he can do: approach the Lord as he is, surrender himself completely to Him, and let Him alone work. Here to speak of a means of salvation is out of the question. Only one means exists, Isvara, and His Prasada, His grace."⁽²⁾

(b) Types of Faith

Just as in the European Reformation of the 16th century there were disputes about the efficacy of the conception sola fide, so there arose two schools of thought among the followers of Ramanuja. The "Southern School" stood for salvation by the sole grace of God, with no synergism or co-operation from the human side, and expressed its meaning by the symbol of the cat, which holds its kittens in its mouth, with no co-operation from the kitten. The "Northern School" on the other hand believed that at least some human co-operation in the work of salvation was needed, and took^{as} its symbol the "monkey-hold", for the young monkey clings with all its strength to its mother, and so makes its own contribution to its own safety.

Ramanuja's tradition was taken up by his disciples and followers. Fifth in succession to him came Ramananda, who in his full and free recognition of the value of human personality broke completely with caste. "Let no one ask a man's caste or sect", he said; "whoever adores God, he is God's own."⁽³⁾ Ramananda began his search after God because the worship of the Impersonal laid no hold on his heart. Through his influence theistic thought radiated in all directions and leaders of the bhakti tradition arose in many parts of India - Tulsidas for the Hindi speakers, Namdev and Tukaram in Maharashtra, Chaitanya in Bengal, Mirabai in the borders of Gujarat and Rajasthan, and Kabir and Nanak, the

(1) For a good exposition see S.Kulandran: Grace: a Comparative Study of the Doctrine in Christianity and Hinduism, (London, 1964), pp.171 ff.

(2) Otto, op. cit. p. 41

(3) Quoted in C.S. Paul, The Suffering God, (CLS, Madras, 1932) p.104.

great religious reformers. So, when the Christian Church took root in many parts of India there was already a strong theistic tradition of bhakti, and there were those who felt that it had led them towards the Light of Christ. (1)

When we consider the features of bhakti thought, and of the system of Ramanuja which supports it, we cannot be surprised at the great attraction which it has held for Indian Christians. Here we are far removed from the cold world of Sankara. Here there is warmth and love and personal devotion: here there is experience of God's grace: here there is that utter self-abandonment to the love and power of God which has distinguished so many Christian saints. Small wonder, then, that to so many, as to Narayan Vaman Tilak, there has seemed to be a direct bridge linking the world of bhakti with the world of Christian faith, a bridge over which the bhakti may cross, and still feel that he has not strayed from home.

(2) Christian Bhakti

So it came about that in the early nineteenth century, while Ram Mohan Roy was striving to interpret Christianity through his own type of "unitarian" non-dualism, convert Christian poets in Tamilnad, deeply steeped in the bhakti tradition of the Hinduism from which they had come, were writing Christian lyrics and longer works which laid the offering of bhakti at the feet of Christ. (2)

(1) For English translations of some of the Hindu bhakti poets see A.J.Appasamy: Temple Bells (Y.M.C.A. Calcutta, 1930). Kingsbury and Phillips: Hymns of the Tamil Saivite Saints (Y.M.C.A. Calcutta, 1921); N. Macnicol: Psalms of the Maratha Saints (Y.M.C.A., 1919).

(2) There was already a tradition of Tamil Christian lyrics. Ziegenbalg began to translate hymns as early as March, 1707, and eventually published a hymnbook "which had only hymns in Tamilian metre and according to the Tamil scale." The Lutheran chorales were, of course, also translated into Tamil (e.g. in Fabricius' first hymnbook of 1774), and greatly influenced the devotion and theology of the people. (Lehmann, op. cit. p. 26f).

The two best known of these Tamil Christian poets are Vedanayaga Sastriar (c.1790 - 1855) and H.A.Krishna Pillai (1827 - 1900).⁽¹⁾

Sastriar as a child had been a favourite in the household of the great Halle missionary Christian Friedrich Schwartz (d.1798). His many compositions include Perinbakadal, a series of contemplations on the nativity and sufferings of Christ, composed in 1813; Balasarithiram of 1821, which deals with the Incarnation; Gnanavula of 1837, a poem in praise of God's mercy and love. The Last Judgment, composed in 1844, is a contemplation of the second coming of our Lord; and Japamalai of 1855 contains a rosary of songs and prayers.⁽²⁾

(a) H.A.Krishna Pillai

Krishna Pillai⁽³⁾ was born in 1827 of a Vaisnavite, non-Brahman, high-caste Hindu family, and as a young teacher in the C.M.S. College, Tirunelveli, was gripped by the Gospel and embraced the Christian faith, being baptised in 1858. His best known works are Rakshanya Yathrikum, an epic based on Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, and Rakshanya Manoharam, describing the joy of salvation through Jesus Christ.

We shall look at some quotations from the works of Krishna Pillai in order to see how, in Rajarigam's words

"in the Tamil Christian poetical works ... the historic process of the Christian faith finding indigenous expression really begins."⁽⁴⁾

Krishna Pillai was not a technical theologian, and indeed his theology was very much that of the evangelical missionaries with whom he came in contact in his early days as a Christian: he has, for instance, a very strong sense of the power of sin, and of Christ's work of sin-bearing on the Cross. At the same time, in a thoroughly

(1) D.Rajarigam: "Theological Content in Tamil Christian Poetical Works", in LJT XI/4 (1962); XII/1 (1963); XII/2 (1964).

(2) D.Rajarigam, LJT XI (1962) p.130.

(3) *ibid* p.131. The writer has been privileged to read in typescript a new study of Krishna Pillai by Bishop A.J.Appasamy (to be published in the World Christian Book series). Unless otherwise stated the following quotations are from this typescript.

(4) Rajarigam, History, p.47. It should be remembered that it is very difficult to retain the spirit of religious poetry when it is translated into another language. The translations which follow, some in prose, some in English metres, and some in the original metres, are by many different hands.

natural, unselfconscious way his own rich poetic imagination, with its vivid background of Hindu literature, both Tamil and Sanskrit, becomes the crucible in which the Christian faith, while fully retaining its structure and power, is transformed into an attractive Indian form. The passages here selected have been chosen mainly to illustrate this process of transformation, but it should be remembered that long passages of his poems are virtually paraphrases from the Bible, as for instance the canto from the Rakshanya Yatrikum in which the institution of the Lord's Supper is described.

(1) The Creation

"To fulfil His will He, by His Word, created inna day the world with a shape, brought it under His umbrella⁽¹⁾, and gave it to the Divine Son."⁽²⁾

(2) The Doctrine of God

Krishna Pillai stoutly attacks the idea of the impersonal Brahma:

"You seem to believe that Brahma has described your Fate on your heart. When will that foolish belief be shaken off by you? If that were true, if all that happens on earth were Fate as destined by Brahma, then can there be any good or any bad, can there be even hell or heaven? Do not perish as godless people. Surrender yourselves to the one good God, O ye of the world; come to worship Him."⁽³⁾

(3) The Trinity

In a passage describing Adam and Eve before the Fall, Krishna Pillai speaks of God as saccidananda:

"Becoming infinite and blissful,
Approaching King Saccidananda, who saves the whole world,
They will take as food for their ears
The exalted sweet words taught by Him."⁽⁴⁾

The trimurti of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva is rejected in favour of the Christian Trinity, and, as so often in bhakti poetry, Motherhood is seen as one of the characteristics of God:

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- (1) i.e. the royal chātri, symbol of Kingship.
 - (2) Rakshanya Yatrikum ("RY"), Pt. I, p.50:2, translated by D. Rajarigam.
 - (3) RY Pt. II, 73, Tr. A.C.Dharmaraj.
 - (4) RY Pt. I, p.51: 14, 15. Tr. D. Rajarigam

He that matched the Trinity
 Of creation, preservation and destruction,
 With Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
 The God in Whom the Three are One,
 And Who is One in Three;
 Holy One in body, word and mind;
 In form the peerless Mother of all good deeds
 And all worthy to be praised;
 Himself the precious remedy for sin -
 It is He I see upon the Cross. (1)

(4) Devotion to Christ

Many different "images" are used to describe Christ. He is the river of life from heaven and the mountain of salvation (Rakshanya Manoharam Ch. 10). His coming in the form of man emptying Himself of his heavenly glory is compared to the taking of medicine by the mother when her sucking child is ill (Christian Lyrics p.41:5). Krishna Pillai describes Him as the ocean of bliss, the cloud that showers the rain of grace, life-giving medicine, gem of gems. (2)

He is the heavenly Ganges (Ganga), which takes away sin:

"It washed clean away the slimy Sin - man's heritage!
 It became his food and drink too - pure and satisfying!
 Thus nourished the life of Wisdom evergreen
 Yielding the fruit of salvation true!
 This was the Blood of our Saviour - Immanuel -
 Shed for all - the living Ganga! (3)

A fine description of the resurrection is given in the Rakshanya Yatrikum. After a lyrical passage describing the rising of the sun and the flight of darkness on the first Easter morning the poet goes on:

"And then in this time glorious,
 Arose the great Son of God,
 As if waking from meditation deep -
 Having gained for all
 In this wide world
 The fruit of salvation, fine,
 Excellent beyond words!

In the beginning He was the Word -
 The middle of the Holy Trinity -
 He came down as Man,
 Mankind to save! (4)

(1) Kallamurum in Garland of Praise of RV. Tr. E.E.White.
 (2) Rajarigan in IJT XII (1963) p.3
 (3) RV., The Living Stream Stanza 7. Tr. R.Rengachari.
 (4) RV., The Story of Salvation, stanzas 43,4. Tr. R.Rengachari.

Another fine passage describes the work of salvation in terms of a swimmer rescuing a drowning man - a figure often used in Indian Christian lyrics:

"The cloud of sin, that devoured the world, spread all over and drew the water of suffering. In the river of death, into which it rained its water, the majestic Saviour swam all alone, with countless souls underneath His arms; was drawn by the floods, laboured without losing the souls, and suffered, being concerned about their salvation." (1)

(5) Sin and Salvation

Krishna Pillai is deeply convinced of the sinfulness of sin, and of the sheer impossibility of trying to overcome it by good works - an effort compared to building a bridge of butter over a river of fire! (2) He describes original sin as follows:

The moment I was conceived in my mother's womb original sin clung to me.
Having been born on earth, all kinds of wickedness began to abound and I became wicked.
The warring good conscience was made blunt, and I having become confounded in mind through the three lusts (3)
Committed sins daily without a limit and spent my days in vain.
There is in me nothing that is good. My evil has gripped me.
What shall I do? (4)

It is only Christ who can save, and the cost is a terrible one, as He takes our sins on Himself:

Who crowned thy Head with cruel thorns?
Put sceptre rough into thy Hand?
Who spat upon thy lotus-Face,
And mocked thee with insulting hands?
Who smote upon thy beauteous Brow,
And thrust into thy Side the spear?
Whose the nails which pierced thy Hands and Feet,
That thy gracious Hands might save mankind?
Was it not I - ah! wretched me -
Did not I cause thy agony?
O Thou that calledst the dying thief,
And ope'd to him the gate of Heaven!
O heavenly King, who came to be
My Guide and Joy eternally! (5)

(1) RY. Pt. I p.225:127. Tr. D.Rajarigam.

(2) RY Pt. II, Rakshanya Navanita Padalam, stanza 7.

(3) i.e. land, woman and money.

(4) Rakshanya Manoharam (RM), p.17:5. Tr. D.Rajarigam.

(5) RM, Section 3, Gnanasambantha Guru v.2. Tr. E.E.White

It was not only in Tamilnad that Christian bhakti poets arose, though Sastriar probably antedated the development in most other parts of India.⁽¹⁾ In Bengal, even before the close of the eighteenth century we hear of Ramram Bose, who, though remaining a Hindu till the end of his life, co-operated with the missionaries in "composing the earliest vernacular hymnology for the Christian Churches."⁽²⁾ In Gujarat Kavyarpan, a book of lyrics in Indian metres, was published in 1863, the authors being a missionary, J.V.S. Taylor, - who had grown up in India, and knew Tamil, Kanarese and Marathi as well as Gujarati - and a young Hindu, known today only by his initials 'H.M.', who never crossed the border of Christianity though he came near it. Before the close of the century hundreds of Christian lyrics, as distinct from translations of Western hymns - had been written in many languages, and some distinguished Christian poets had emerged, men like Krishna Pillai in Tamilnad, Purushottam Choudary in the Telugu country, Kahanji Madhavji Ratnagrahi in Gujarat, and Narayan Vaman Tilak in Maharashtra.⁽³⁾

It was men who were within the bhakti tradition who were able to make this great step forward in the self-expression of Indian Christianity, and practically all of them were themselves converts, who brought with them from Hinduism their lyric ability and vocabulary. Some of them, like Kahanji Madhavji of Gujarat, came from castes which were traditionally devoted to singing and poetry. There were many other fine Christians who could not, and would not choose this road, but preferred to translate Western hymns. Pandita Ramabai, for example, though she had been steeped in Sanskrit learning, would only translate, and that into English metres, as in her version of "Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing blood?"⁽⁴⁾ So too, Ellen Goreh,

(1) Sastriar was a younger contemporary of Ram Mohan Roy: Krishna Pillai's life coincides in time with Goreh's.

(2) v. Kalidas Nag in Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. II p.398.

(3) The writer regrets his inability to discuss the work of bhakti-poets from each area. Those from Tamilnad/Maharashtra have been made familiar through English translations, and he is personally familiar with the work of the Gujarati writers only.

(4) Macnicol: India in the Dark Wood p. 131.

daughter of Nehemiah Goreh, was the author of English hymns only.

Macnicol comments,

"How different was the music that Tilak waked in the hearts of the Christians whom he taught to sing! He brought to the Maratha Church a renaissance not only of religion but of poetry and literature. Their very language took a new birth, and even the outcaste Christians, newly up from slavery, had some glimpse, as they sang, of the possessions that were theirs to explore and to appropriate not only in Christ Jesus but also in their own Indian past."⁽¹⁾

(b) Narayan Vaman Tilak (1862-1919)

Narayan Vaman Tilak⁽²⁾ came of the same community of Chitpavan Brahmans which produced Nehemiah Goreh and Pandita Ramabai. Like Sundar Singh, he was deeply influenced by his mother, herself a poetess, who died when he was only eleven. He attracted the attention of a famous Sanskrit scholar, Ganesh Sastri Lele, and later of the famous Justice Ranade, and became well known as a poet and singer.

Through a chance encounter in the train with a Christian stranger who gave him a New Testament he eventually became convinced of the truth of the Christian faith, and was baptised in 1895, suffering much persecution at the outset, and five years separation from his wife, who at first refused to join him.⁽³⁾ He was given work with the American Marathi Mission (Congregational) at Ahmednagar, and eventually ordained as a minister in 1904. Towards the end of his life of faithful service he began to be attracted towards the sannyasi ideal, and, giving up his secure position in the Mission, he became a Christian sannyasi in 1917, seeking to gather round himself, in a group called "God's Darbar",⁽⁴⁾ a "brotherhood of the baptised and unbaptised disciples of Christ".⁽⁵⁾ He believed, writes his biographer, that

"if Christ could be presented to India in his naked beauty, free from the

(1) Macnicol op. cit. p.131

(2) J.C.Winslow: Narayan Vaman Tilak: The Christian Poet of Maharashtra (YMCA, Calcutta, 1930).

(3) She eventually became a Christian, and the ardent helper of her husband. See Lakshmi Bai Tilak: I Follow After: An Autobiography translated by E.J. Inkster (Oxford, Bombay, 1950).

(4) devatasa darbar. darbar means a royal court, kingdom.

(5) Winslow, p.119

disguises of Western organization, Western doctrine and Western forms of worship, India would acknowledge Him as the Supreme Guru, and lay her richest homage at His feet."⁽¹⁾

After a short twenty months of the life of a sannyasi, Tilak died on 9th May, 1919.

Tilak's reputation as a poet is by no means limited to Christian circles, for he was one of the acknowledged leaders of the "romantic revival" in Marathi literature at the end of the 19th century. His Christian poems include many lyrics which are used in congregational worship, and also for evangelistic proclamation, as well as many which are primarily vehicles of intense personal devotion. It was his ambition to write a great verse epic, a life of Christ, but in the end he was able to complete only a small part of this Christayan, though even this fragment has been described as "a great Purana of the Christian Avatara".⁽²⁾ His last collection of poems, Abhanganjali,⁽³⁾ is generally regarded as his crowning work.

Tilak's poetry is much more devotional than theological. We shall give a few examples in translation, which indicate something of his depth of feeling and devotion.

(1) On Christ as Mother

Tenderest Mother-Guru mind,
Saviour, where is love like Thine?

A cool and never-fading shade
To souls by sin's fierce heat dismayed:

Right swiftly at my earliest cry
He came to save me from the sky:

He made him friends of those that mourn
With hearts by meek contrition torn:

For me, a sinner, yea, for me
He hastened to the bitter Tree:

And still within me living, too,
He fills my being through and through.

My heart is all one melody -
Hail to Thee, Christ! all hail to Thee! "⁽⁴⁾

(1) Winslow p.118.

(2) *ibid.* p.89.

(3) "Collection of abhangas",
abhanga being the metre in which
Tukaram wrote his poetry.

(4) Winslow, *op.cit.* p.85. Winslow's
translation. From Bhajan Sangraha p.1

(2) The Incarnation (from a Carol)

Love downward hies in human guise
To save our fallen race
With human hands to lift us up
Once more from death's embrace.

Come, let us throne Him in our hearts,
And sweetly sing His grace;
Sound we through hill and dale
"Hail, Jesu! Saviour, hail!" (1)

(3) The Spirit of Bhakti

Many of the poems illustrate the nature of bhakti as the soul's longing for union with God, in the same sort of idiom as is found in the poems of Namdev or Tukaram.

The more I win Thee, Lord, the more for Thee I pine;
Ah, such a heart is mine.
My eyes behold Thee and are filled, and straightway then,
Their hunger wakes again!
My arms have clasped Thee and should set Thee free, but no,
I cannot let Thee go!
Thou dwell'st within my heart. Forthwith anew the fire
Burns of my soul's desire.
Lord Jesus Christ, Beloved, tell, O tell me true,
What shall Thy servant do? (2)

(4) The Cross

Tilak's hymns on the atonement are simple expressions of love, and amazement at God's suffering grace.

Ah, did not He the heavenly Throne
A little thing esteem,
And not unworthy for my sake
A mortal body deem?

When in His flesh they drove the nails,
Did He not all endure?
What name is there to fit a life
So patient and so pure?

So Love itself in human form,
For love of me He came.
I cannot look upon His face
For shame, for bitter shame. (3)

As we look upon such love, what can we do but surrender ourselves in love to Him?

(1) *ibid.* p.87, Winslow's transl. From Bhajan Sangraha p.45

(2) *ibid.* p.93, Winslow's transl. From Abhanganjali No. 124.

(3) *ibid.* p.97, Macnicol's transl. Upasana Sangit No. 246. Printed also in Revised Church Hymnary, No. 406, (Oxford. 1927)

Hast thou ever seen the Lord, Christ the Crucified?
Hast thou seen those wounded hands? Hast thou seen His side?
Hast thou seen the cruel thorns woven for His crown?
Hast thou, hast thou seen His blood, dropping, dropping down?
Hast thou seen who that one is who has hurt Him so?
Hast thou seen the sinner, cause of all His woe?
Hast thou seen how He, to save, suffers there and dies?
Hast thou seen on whom He looks with His loving eyes?
Hast thou ever, ever seen love that was like this?
Hast thou given up thy life wholly to be His? (1)

(5) Faith-union with Christ

As the moon and its beams are one,
So, that I be one with Thee,
This is my prayer to Thee, my Lord,
This is my beggar's plea.
I would snare Thee and hold Thee ever
In loving wifely ways;
I give Thee a daughter's welcome,
I give Thee a sister's praise.
As words and their meaning are linked,
Serving one purpose each,
Be Thou and I so knit, O Lord,
And through me breathe Thy speech.
O be my soul a mirror clear,
That I may see Thee there;
Dwell in my thought, my speech, my life,
Making them glad and fair.
Take Thou, this body, O my Christ,
Dwell as its soul within. (2)
To be an instant separate
I count a deadly sin. (3)

In 1917, towards the close of his life, Tilak, like some other Indian saints, had a vision of Christ, as a result of which he became convinced that he must take up the life of a sannyasi. He describes the experience:

Ye ask, and so to tell ye I am bold;
Yea, with these eyes did I the Christ behold -
Awake, not sleeping, did upon Him gaze,
And at the sight stood tranced with amaze.

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- (1) *ibid.* p. 98, Macnicol's transl. Upasana Sengit No. 144.
(2) Compare Ramanuja's soul-body analogy, and the doctrine of the antaryamin v. *infra* pp. 348 ff.
(3) *ibid.* p. 101, Macnicol's transl. Upasana Sengit No. 126.

.....
 But this alone I know, that from that day
 This self of mine hath vanished quite away.
 Great Lord of Yoga⁽¹⁾, Thou hast yoked with Thee,
 Seith Dasa,⁽²⁾ even a poor wight like me!⁽³⁾

(6) The Indian heritage

Tilak longed for India to come to Christ, and for the Church to become truly Indian. He writes:

When shall these longings be sufficed
 That stir my spirit night and day?
 When shall I see my country lay
 Her homage at the feet of Christ? -

Yea, how behold that blissful day
 When all her prophets' mystic lore
 And all her ancient wisdom's store
 Shall own His consummating sway?

....
 Of all I have, O Saviour sweet, -
 All gifts, all skill, all thoughts of mine, -
 A living garland I entwine,
 And offer at Thy lotus feet.⁽⁴⁾

Tilak, as we have seen, was steeped in the bhakti tradition long before he became a Christian. As he himself said, he had journeyed "by the bridge of Tukaram" to the feet of Christ.⁽⁵⁾ Macnicol writes,

"It is as one who brought together and fused the Christian message and the great Hindu tradition of bhakti or Loving devotion, as expressed in the Psalms of the Maratha poet-saints, that Narayan Vaman Tilak has a message for us that is of peculiar preciousness. He not only came to Christ by the bridge of Tukaram, but he brought across that bridge and laid at his Master's feet the wealth of devotional ardour that the line of bhakti singers had garnered through the centuries. There was no need of a reconciler or interpreter: all that needed to be done was to take these longings and crown them by the discovery of Christ. Tilak falls naturally into his place as the latest-born of that eager company - a Christian bhakti-saint and bhakti-poet. As they sought fellowship with the unknown God, he likewise seeks it, and, travelling further along the same road of desire by which their feet had journeyed, he finds it in Christ Jesus." ⁽⁶⁾

"As the moon and its rays are one - so, that I be one with Thee,
 That is my cry to Thee, O God, that is this beggar's plea."

-
- (1) Yoga here means union.
 (2) It is customary in these lyrics for the poet to bring his own name into the final couplet. Tilak uses the name dasa, servant.
 (3) Winslow op. cit. p. 114. Winslow's transl. Abhang No. 22.
 (4) *ibid.* p.108 From Chap.2 of the Christayan, Macnicol's transl.
 (5) Macnicol, op. cit. p.128.
 (6) *ibid.*

"For Tilak the moon had come down by the stairway of its beams and dwells within his heart. This is the reconciliation of Christianity and Hinduism that this poet has accomplished, and so has claimed for himself and for the Christian Church a rich portion of the Hindu heritage."⁽¹⁾

The work of Tilak, and of other Christian bhakti-poets represents a permanent store-house of devotion and theology for the Indian Church, comparable with the great Latin hymns of the early church, or with Luther's chorales, or the great German hymnodists, Gerhardt, Tersteegen and Neander, or the hymns of Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley in England. The work of quarrying out and assessing this great wealth has still scarcely begun. It is a strange reflection that Brahmbandhab, Tilak's contemporary who, besides his Sanskrit poetry, sought also to express his convictions in technical theological language, was rejected by his own Roman Catholic Church. Tilak, who used only the language of poetry, has been honoured and accepted not only by Protestants, but even by Roman Catholics.⁽²⁾ Tilak's solution to the problem of expressing the Christian faith in Indian terms has found acceptance, and brought much blessing. Yet Brahmbandhab's self-appointed task cannot be evaded, and still awaits completion.

(C) Kahanji Madhavji Ratnagrahi (c.1870-1916)

For our final examples of Christian bhakti poetry we shall turn to two hymns, both on the incarnation, by the best-known hymn writer of Gujarat, Kahanji Madhavji Ratnagrahi.⁽³⁾ Born in Gandhi's birth-place, Porbandar, and an almost exact contemporary of his, Kahanji Madhavji belonged to the Lavana caste, and became well known as a writer before becoming a Christian. He was led to Christ through the witness of a Christian family in Porbandar, and was baptised in Rajkot in 1893, suffering much persecution and losing his home, family and employment for Christ. Later he studied theology in Ahmedabad, and became a minister in what was then the Presbyterian Church.

(1) *ibid.*

(2) A "Narayan Tilak Library" was opened in the Catholic Ashram, Nasik, in May, 1963!

(3) R.H. Boyd: Trophies for the King (IVth series), (Belfast, 1956), pp. 12 ff.

He published several books of Christian lyrics, and a life of Christ in verse - the Khristakhyan. He died suddenly in 1916, while still at the height of his powers, but the Church in Gujarat continues to use many of his lyrics.

Here are some verses of a Christmas carol:

King of kings, and Lord of lords, and Maker of all is He;
Leaving the glory of heaven He comes, incarnate⁽¹⁾ now to be.

Refrain: Joyful Christmas hymns we sing: born is Christ of the world the King.

Lord of the world,⁽²⁾ on the world He has lavished wondrous love and grace;
Born of the womb of the Virgin Mary, there in David's place.

Christ to the world, for the world deserting His heavenly throne has come;
Welcome the King of Glory; give Him here in your heart a home.

Worship now, but do not leave Him out in the stable bare;
Give Him a place in your life; enthrone Him King of Glory there.⁽³⁾

Another hymn of the incarnation is in effect a commentary on Philippians 2:7.

1. Heaven and its joys Thou did'st leave behind Thee
Knowing man's pitiful story;
Down from the highest to earth descending⁽⁴⁾
Emptiedst Thyself of glory.

Refrain: Glory, glory, Christ, to Thee, Master,⁽⁵⁾ be glory.
Christ, to Thee, merciful Master be glory, glory;
Christ, to Thee, Master, be glory.

2. Though Thou wast rich, yet for our sakes into the world
Cam'st Thou, all riches forsaking;
Prince though Thou wast of the Mansions of Paradise,
Part in our poverty taking
3. Born of the womb of Thy Mother Mary,
Ours is the flesh Thou hast taken;
Humble the shed where from sleeping, dear one,
Softly Thy limbs awaken....
4. Here in this world Thou did'st make Thy dwelling,
Man from his suffering restoring;
Sight to the blind, and for lameness leaping
Gav'st Thou, Thy strength outpouring....

(1) The Gujarati word is avataara.

(2) Jagaswami

(3) Tr. R.H.S. Boyd. An effort has been made to retain the original metre.

(4) The third line of each verse is repeated.

(5) Swami

5. Day after day, in Thy love and Thy pity
Glorious the message reflected;
Yet the whole world, sin-blinded, blinded
Christ its own Master rejected....
6. Mine is the sin by which Thou art wounded;
Pierced are Thy limbs; Thou diest;
I shall sing ever the song of Thy love, Lord,
Lord, Thou most dear, Thou all-highest...(1)

This much-loved hymn is remarkable for its deep devotion combined with a clear yet simple exposition of the Incarnation which emphasizes equally the divinity and humanity of Christ. The self-identification of the writer with those who put Christ to death is typical of Indian Christian bhakti, as it is of the great German chorales:

Mine, mine was the transgression,
But Thine the bitter pain.(2)

Conclusion

We do not look to the bhakti poets for deep theological exposition. But we do find that it is largely through their work that the language of Christian devotion, and even to some extent of technical theology, has become fixed in the different Indian languages. Some of them had comparatively little knowledge of English, and this was perhaps a help rather than a hindrance in enabling them to transform ideas and terms within their minds, speaking in a language familiar to their hearers from an experience which could be found only in Christ.

The lyrics are all bhakti-lyrics, reflecting a warm, personal approach to God through Christ. Here God is never nirguna Brahman, but rather Lord, King, guru, swami, Ocean of Mercy, Mother and Father. The same terms are applied to Christ. The Holy Spirit is spoken of as a flood of joy, medicine for the heart, the key to heaven, the stream of oil of happiness, sacred milk.(3) The bhakti-poets are the men who above all have made Christianity "at home" in India: their

(1) Tr. R.H.S. Boyd. The metre (retained in translation) is Dhanasri.

(2) Paul Gerhardt 1607-76. Tr. J.W. Alexander.

(3) D.Rajarigam LFT XII (1963) p.4f.

songs are sung and learnt by heart by thousands who would never read a book of theology, and, next to the Bible, their works have probably been the most important in helping the Christian Church to take root in Indian soil and to bear the blossoms which the richness of that soil encourages to grow in such profusion.

CHAPTER VII

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND THE UNITY OF ALL RELIGIONS

Before we proceed to consider the next great figure on the Christian theological stage, Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, it is important that we should glance briefly at some of the later reform movements in 19th century Hinduism, as these had a close influence on the development of a distinctively Indian theology, and especially at Swami Vivekananda, whose viewpoint is still so widely accepted in Hinduism.

1. Swami Dayanand Sarasvati (1824-1883)

The relationship between the Brahma Samaj and Christianity had, as we have seen, certain dynamic and constructive features. The same could not be said of the Arya Samaj founded in Bombay in 1875 by Swami Dayanand Sarasvati, for from the beginning the Arya Samaj has taken up a hostile and critical attitude towards Christianity, and the attack is still energetically maintained today in countless pamphlets and articles.⁽¹⁾

Dayanand was born at Morvi in Saurashtra, in an orthodox Brahman family. As a boy he lost his faith in idol-worship, through a late-night vigil in a temple of Siva, where he saw a mouse eating the food offered to the God.⁽²⁾ After many years of wandering, he found at Muttra a guru, Swami Virajananda, who had given up all modern forms of Hinduism and returned to the study of the religion of the Vedas.⁽³⁾ Dayanand accepted this teaching, and turning away from all the later accumulations of ritualistic Hinduism, became the advocate of the religion of the Vedas, understood in his own peculiar way.

According to him, "The Vedas are the purest record of the highest form of monotheism possible to conceive."⁽⁴⁾ Quite obviously this statement can be made

(1) v. supra for Goreh's attitude to the Arya Samaj, p. 138.

(2) Andrews, op. cit. p. 117. Farquhar, Modern Religious Movements p. 101 f.

(3) ibid. p. 118.

(4) Andrews, op. cit. p. 120.

only on the strength of an artificial exegesis of the Vedas, which very clearly reflect an early polytheistic view, full as they are of the gods of nature. No one with a serious understanding of critical method or of comparative religion could make such a claim on behalf of the Vedas, and seek to find in them not only pure monotheism, but also "any scientific theory or principle which is thought to be of modern origin".⁽¹⁾ And in fact Dayanand used the method of allegorical exegesis in order to attain his results. Before simply condemning him we must remember that such Church Fathers as Origen freely interpreted the Bible by this method, and it is not unknown in many circles even today, for example, with reference to the Song of Songs. This allegorical exegesis of the Vedas is a warning to the Christian apologist that only if he himself is strictly scholarly and historical in his Biblical exegesis can he be in a position to criticize Dayanand's method.

Swami Dayanand's great apologia for Vedic Hinduism is Satyarth Prakash,⁽²⁾ a work which is written with a definitely polemical intent towards Christianity and Islam.⁽³⁾ He was, in fact, fighting on two fronts - against traditional Hinduism, and against Christianity, whose spread he wished to stop. In contrast to Ram Mohan Roy, whose guiding principle was reason, and Keshub Chunder Sen, who glided imperceptibly from reason to his own inspiration, Dayanand represents a return to the concept of Revelation, conveyed through sacred and infallible Scripture. For him the Vedas are indeed sruti, the Scripture which is divinely inspired, heard by the rishis, and handed on to men for their acceptance. It is an interesting comment on the power of his teaching to know that his followers now treat his Satyarth Prakash as itself having the sanctity and authority of Scripture.⁽⁴⁾

The Arya Samaj represents a clear "No" to the claims of the Christian faith. It stresses the sufficiency of the Vedas to meet all the needs of the people of India, now and in the future, and consistently refuses to enter into a constructive

(1) Andrews, op. cit. p.120

(2) Satyārtha Prakāśa: The Light of Truth

(3) Muliylil, op. cit. p.122

(4) ibid.

"dialogue" with other faiths.

2. Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886)

We have seen so far the reaction to Christianity of two reforming movements of modern Hinduism, the Brahma Samaj and the Arya Samaj. These movements met with an immediate response, and were to some extent responsible for checking the spread of the Christian faith among the educated classes of society. Yet the response was limited, and only a very small proportion of the vast Hindu population of India was affected: there had still been no movement, there had arisen no leader to give renewal and cohesion to the traditional structure of Hinduism, which appeared to be being undermined from different directions.

Sri Ramakrishna⁽¹⁾ provided just such leadership. He was born in 1836 in a poor Brahman family in an isolated village of Bengal. As a child he showed tendencies to go into trances of religious ecstasy. As a young man he went to live and perform the duties of a Brahman at the Daksinesvar Temple near Calcutta, and there developed a great personal devotion to the goddess Kali, the Mother. For some years he went through all the different sadhana of the bhakti marga, including initiation in the Tankrika rites. He was a man of great simplicity, and little formal education, who found it possible - sometimes after long struggle and asceticism - to obtain realization in the adoration of the different deities of the bhakti marga. In particular, he had experiences of complete personal union with Kali, Sita and Krishna.⁽²⁾

After thus exhausting the possibilities of dualistic Hinduism, and achieving in the process considerable fame as a devotee, he turned to the way of advaita, in which his guide was a sannyasi named Tota Puri. Under his instruction he swiftly mastered the way of non-dualism, and reached a state of samadhi, complete absorption in nirguna Brahman, the Absolute.

(1) Farquhar, op. cit. p.188 ff.

(2) Cultural Heritage of India. Vol. II, p.441 ff. There are many lives of Ramakrishna, e.g. Mohendranath Gupta: The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna (Madras, 1912). F. Max Muller: Ramakrishna Paramhansa - His Life and Sayings. (London, 1900).

He had now in effect participated in the whole gamut of Hindu religious experience, compressing into the space of eight or nine years what few devotees achieve in a life-time. And so his thoughts turned to other ways. In 1866 he became interested in Islam, and for a time identified himself with its religion and life, his experience culminating in a vision thought to have been that of the Prophet Mahomet himself.

Eight years later in 1874, he suddenly became interested in Christianity, and asked a Hindu friend who lived nearby to read out the Bible to him. We are told that "he eagerly imbibed all that he heard about Christ. The wonderfully beatific life of Jesus fascinated him, and he was caught."⁽¹⁾ Shortly afterwards, as he was sitting in the house of another friend, his attention was riveted by a picture on the wall of the Madonna and Child. "Instantly the holy figures appeared to be warmed into life; and he observed that they were radiating rays of light that pierced his flesh and went straight to his heart."⁽²⁾ After a short struggle he surrendered to his new vision. "The Hindu child of the Divine Mother became thoroughly metamorphosed into an orthodox devotee of the Son of Man. His heart was full of Christ and his ideal. Christian thought and Christian love appeared for three consecutive days to be the sole contents of his mind."⁽³⁾

On the fourth day, as he was strolling in a grove of trees, he had a sudden vision of a Stranger with fair skin and beautiful large eyes:

"A voice came up from the depths of Ramakrishna's heart: 'This is the Christ who poured out His heart's blood for the redemption of mankind and suffered agonies for its sake. It is none else but that Master-Yogin Jesus, the embodiment of love.' Immediately after that the Son of Man clasped to his bosom the child of the Divine Mother and became one with him. Christ merged in Ramakrishna, who forthwith lost his outward consciousness and became completely absorbed in the savikalpa samadhi in which he realised his union with Brahman with attributes.

(1) Cult. Heritage II p.493.

(2) ibid. p.494.

(3) ibid.

After this experience Ramakrishna remained firm to his conviction up to the last days of his life that Jesus Christ was an Incarnation of God." (1)

It seems clear from this account that Ramakrishna had a genuine spiritual or psychical experience connected with Christ, whose life and Person he had been studying. One notices, however, that his whole Christian experience lasted only four days in contrast to the years spent in mastering the techniques of Hindu Dualism and Non-Dualism. The bhakti-experience seems to have ^{had} little content: this was an experience which he had already had with Kali, Sita and Krishna, and only the name and form (nama, rupa) seem to be changed. Also, the description of his union with Christ as savikalpa samadhi the experience of union with saguna Brahman, puts this event definitely on a lower plane than the nirvikalpa samadhi which, by the way of advaita, he experienced in union with nirguna Brahman. His experience of Christ could not be called a living, life-changing encounter with the Living God: It seems rather to be an added exotic psychical experience to one who had already exhausted the possibilities of the different sadhana of Hinduism. The experience seems to have left no permanent effect, beyond confirming his conviction that 'God-realization' was possible in all religions.

Ramakrishna's attitude to the Christian faith is one that has now become very widespread in India, so it is worth while to turn to one of his early expressions of it.

"I have practised all religions", he says, "Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and I have also followed the paths of the different Hindu sects... I have found that it is the same God towards whom all are directing their steps, though along different paths... The tank has several ghats. At one Hindu's draw water in pitchers, and call it 'Jala'; at another Mussalmans draw water in leathern bottles, and call it 'Pani'; at a third Christians do the same and call it 'water'." (2)

(1) *ibid.*
(2) *ibid.* p.518

This message of "the harmony of all religions" is one which Ramakrishna bequeathed to his successor Vivekananda, as we shall see. So far as Ramakrishna's own work is concerned, it can be seen that he infused new life into traditional Hinduism, attracting both modernists like Keshub Chunder Sen and also thousands of pious, orthodox Hindus. His later life, till his death at the age of 50 in 1886, was devoted to teaching those who came to hear him, and demonstrating the many and varied ways in which he himself claimed to have found realization.⁽¹⁾

3. Swami Vivekananda (1862-1902)

Ramakrishna's successor, Vivekananda, was in every way a contrast to his guru. He had received a thorough Western education, graduating from Calcutta University in 1884, and absorbing much of the materialism which was then current. In the year 1880, however, he had first come in contact with Ramakrishna, and gradually fell under the spell of his obvious simplicity and goodness. From the varied experience and teaching of his master he concluded that all religions lead to the same goal, and later developed this principle still farther.

When Ramakrishna died in 1886, Vivekananda was the obvious figure to succeed him as leader of the band of disciples. Right from the beginning we see Vivekananda's eagerness to regard Ramakrishna as an Incarnation of God, and also to appropriate some of the methods and terminology of Christianity.

(1) For the sake of interest we may give here one of Ramakrishna's best-known "pictures" as applied to Christology, indicating clearly his doctetic view of the Incarnation. "When the shell of an ordinary coconut is pierced through, the nail enters the kernel of the nut too. But in the case of the dry nut, the kernel becomes separate from the shell, and so when the shell is pierced the kernel is not touched. Jesus was like the dry nut. i.e. His inner soul was separate from His physical shell, and consequently the sufferings of the body did not affect Him." (from Max Müller, Ramakrishna, His Life and Sayings. (London, 1900) p.112, quoted in Appasamy, Christianity as Bhakti Marga p.116

"He presented Ramakrishna's life as having striking parallels to the Person of Christ. It was on a Christmas Day that he first gathered the disciples together to instruct them about future plans. In moving terms he told them the story of Christ, identified Ramakrishna with Christ, and finally exhorted the disciples to become 'Christs' after the pattern of their guru".⁽¹⁾

He refers to Ramakrishna as "the foremost of divine Incarnations", and sees his own position as being to Ramakrishna what Peter or Paul were to Christ.⁽²⁾

Vivekananda was a brilliant speaker, and a man of great ability and charm. For about six years the centre of activity of the matha or monastery which he founded (later the Ramakrishna Mission) was at Baranagore (1886-1892), and later he moved to Alambazar near Dakshineswar, and finally to Belur, where the permanent headquarters of the Mission was built. He trained his followers, studied deeply, travelled widely, and became filled with a great love for his country and a longing to do something to help it, and restore its lost position among the nations of the world. "He began to interpret the doctrine of karma in terms of the fulfilment of social responsibilities."⁽³⁾

In 1893 his supporters helped him to travel to America to attend the "World Parliament of Religions" in Chicago, where he made a great impression. The theme of all his addresses was that India had discovered a principle which was of priceless worth to the whole world - the gospel of the harmony of all religions. He found a ready audience, and many people were won over to attachment to him and his teaching. From the West he learned something of social and economic improvement, which he later sought to pass on to his fellow workers in India, but on the whole the West, with its materialism and lack of religious life, did not impress him, and his belief in the superiority of Hinduism, and especially advaita, to all other religions was confirmed.

(1) J.R.Chandran: unpublished thesis, "A Comparison of the pagan apologetic of Celsus against Christianity as contained in Origen's Contra Celsum and the neo-Hindu attitude to Christianity as represented in the works of Vivekananda" (Oxford, 1949) p.122

(2) *ibid.* p.155

(3) *ibid.* p. 125

On his return to India, he founded the Ramakrishna Mission in 1897. The mission centred in the life and teaching of Ramakrishna, and envisaged a close fellowship of members of different religions who recognised their faiths to be different manifestations of the one eternal religion whose purest form was the advaita Vedanta. The members of the Mission were trained in the proclamation of the beliefs of Ramakrishna, and in various forms of social welfare, for Vivekananda always had the good of his countrymen at heart. "He combined in his life the roles of an active social reformer, a rationalist, Vedanta philosopher and a simple mystic."⁽¹⁾

His relationship to Christianity is interesting and important, as some of his views have become standard in neo-Hinduism, in particular his teaching on the equality of all religions - though indeed this principle really derives from Ramakrishna, and, in fact, Vivekananda made it clear that advaita was ultimately the best religion, useful as others might be as ways to the end.

Following the lead of a modern Indian Christian critic of Vivekananda, Dr. J.R.Chandran, we shall look at his treatment of some basic Christian doctrines.⁽²⁾

(1) The Doctrine of Creation

For Vivekananda, as a Vedantist, there can be no creation: a Personal God cannot bring the world into existence ex nihilo. The world is rather "evolved" from God, as a spider spins its web out of its own body. A doctrine of creation is incompatible with the Immutability of God. If the atman or soul is created, then it must also be perishable, which is impossible. The dominating advaita idea of the atman and param-atman being one is irreconcilable with the Christian doctrine of creation which sees man as God's fallen creature, in need of redemption.

(2) Man and Sin

Though sometimes stating the pantheist view that the difference between men

(1) J.R.Chandran, op. cit. p. 135.

(2) ibid Chapter IV.

and animals is only one of degree, not of kind, Vivekananda usually proclaimed an ebullient, optimistic estimate of the worth of man, based more on 19th century humanism than on Hindu teaching. He constantly exhorted his countrymen to rise to their full moral stature, to be "lions not sheep".⁽¹⁾ With this optimism went a denial of the reality of sin. It was sin to call a man a sinner.⁽²⁾ "Sin" was simply ignorance and weakness caused by the

"hypnosis of maya. Essentially all ideas of imperfection and sinfulness are hallucinations since man is of the substance of God Himself."⁽³⁾

Here there is no conception of sin, or the love of God, or repentance and forgiveness. What Vivekananda wants, rather, is a kind of "de-hypnosis"⁽⁴⁾ to obliterate the effects of maya and allow us to see our essential unity with God.

(3) Christology

He always spoke of Jesus with reverence, but could not perceive anything unique in Him. His attitude towards Christ was one of sentimental affection and admiration, since his dominant passion was for the glorification of India and the Vedanta, and nothing else could be allowed to be unique.

At times he gives the impression of questioning the historicity of Jesus, and affirming that all the New Testament teaching could be paralleled from Rabbinical teaching. In this point of view he was, of course, helped by the works of some of the higher critics and of the rationalists of his time in the West.

However, this was not his consistent attitude, and he attempted to accommodate Jesus into the Hindu theory of many avatars. Holding that God cannot suffer - an inevitable position of the advaitin - he affirmed in docetic fashion that it was only a "semblance" who was crucified. Of the miracles he merely said

(1) op. cit. p.199

(2) ibid. p.200

(3) ibid.

(4) ibid.

"Miracles are a stumbling block, let us brush them aside." Similarly he was unwilling to admit the perfection of Jesus. He makes the strange statement, "Jesus was imperfect because he did not live up fully to his own ideal and above all because he did not give women a place equal to men.... Still, he was the greatest character next to Buddha who in his turn was not perfect."

It is clear that here there is no consistent view of the Person of Christ: sometimes his view is docetic; sometimes he thinks of Christ simply as an outstanding man. Both these points of view are still often to be seen in Hindu critiques of Jesus.

"His divinity was merely a manifestation of the divinity of man in strict accordance with his Vedantic monism." (1)

Vivekananda is unable to take seriously the Christian view of Incarnation. It does not matter to him whether incarnations are historical, or not; he accepts Buddha and Ramakrishna as historical, but has doubts about all others, including Jesus, and in any case the historicity is of no great moment. Incarnations are necessary only as a concession to man's inability to see God, and have no permanent significance. Again, incarnations are always associated with the beginning of a new era, when they come down to punish the wicked and reward the righteous. Such an era has now commenced with the coming of Ramakrishna, so there is no need to pay special attention to other incarnations, like Jesus. In any case, Vivekananda with his advaita standpoint is far from conceding the necessity of incarnations, or the intervention of personal forms of God, at all.

Dr. Chandran draws an illuminating comparison between Vivekananda and his Christian contemporary, Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, whom we shall later study in more detail.

"For Brahmabandhab, Krishna and the other Hindu gods were avatars, but Christ alone was the Incarnation, the Word became flesh. The avatars were the expressions of natural religion whereas the Incarnation in Christ alone brought the revealed religion of Grace." (2)

(1) Chandran, op. cit. p.207

(2) *ibid.* p.209.

Vivekananda, like all advaitins, fails to see the importance of history; for him, religion is all natural theology, rather than the active intervention in love and in justice of the Living God in history. As Dr. Chandran says:

"There is a fundamental conflict between the Hebrew Christian understanding of (a) man as both a creature and the object of God's love and a sinner who cannot be redeemed except through God's grace, and (b) the evaluation of history as a real and purposive unity in the hands of God, and the Hindu and Greek view of the essential divinity of the soul and the interpretation of history in terms of meaningless repetition of cycles." (1)

The Logos

Vivekananda interprets the first five verses of the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel in terms of the Hindu doctrine of creation by Maya, and concludes that this is the essence of Christianity. The "Word" or "Logos" then is manifested both in nature ("all things were made by Him") and in special incarnations, of whom Jesus is one, while Krishna, Buddha, Ramakrishna are others. "The 'Word' is the external and concrete form of thought involved in the idea of creation contained in every religious philosophy." (2) His suggestion, therefore, is that there is nothing unique stated in the Prologue, but that this is simply a common philosophical truth about the relation between God, the Word, and the incarnations known to Hinduism.

Vivekananda is very wide of the mark here, for the essence of the Prologue is that the Word became flesh, in a historic Person. There is no trace of Maya there. And the world was created by Him - an entirely different thing from any kind of "manifestation."

Many writers have drawn attention to the affinity between certain aspects of Johanne thought and that of some schools of Hinduism. (3) Dr. Chandran quotes Ramanaia:

"In the beginning there was sent forth by the creator the eternal word of the Veda, and from it there originated all creation." (4)

(1) Chandran, op. cit. p. 209.

(2) *ibid.* p. 176.

(3) e.g. A.J. Appasamy, Christianity as Bhakti Marga v. infra pp. 289 ff.

(4) Max Muller (ed.) Sacred Books of the East XLVIII, p. 332

And again Sankara:

"Before creation the Vedic words became manifest in the mind of the creator and then created the things corresponding to those words."⁽¹⁾

But the similarity is illusory, for though there may be affinities between Hindu usage and that of certain Hellenistic conceptions of the Logos, the Johannine usage is concrete, historic and Christ-centred, and cannot be made part of a system of natural theology.

(4) The Union of Father and Son, and of Christ and the Believer.

Vivekananda takes certain texts - "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30); "The Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21); and "In Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28),⁽²⁾ - and from these tries to derive the Vedantic principle of the identification of the individual soul with the ultimate Brahman. His assumption is that Christ experienced absorption in the Absolute, or Brahman, and similarly we, with Him can be so absorbed. The intimate and personal "faith union" of the believer with Christ is thus eliminated, and the distinction between the three Persons of the Trinity is denied.

"Vivekananda approached the Bible with the assumption derived from Hindu metaphysics that ultimately there is no distinction between the self which was in Jesus and the other individual selves, and whatever is predicated about Jesus is applicable to each individual self."⁽³⁾

The Johannine understanding of the words, "I and the Father are one" is, on the contrary, that the historic Jesus is truly God. We may quote the illuminating comment of Dr. A. J. Appasamy:

"This utterance ['I and the Father are one'] has appealed to the religious heart of India which, because of the monistic point of view so largely familiar to it, has defied all reasonable laws of exegesis and has interpreted the passage to mean that Jesus, always one with God, realised in a luminous moment this supreme identity. But we must remember that Jesus always lived in whole-hearted trust and faith in the Father. He did not consider Himself as identical with God."⁽⁴⁾

(1) SEE XXXIV p.204.

(2) This quotation used by Paul at Athens, is generally supposed to be from Epimenides of Crete.

(3) Chandran op. cit. p. 179.

(4) What is Moksha? p. 2. Dr.Appasamy's own understanding of the unity of the Son with the Father is "His sense of moral harmony with God." *ibid.* p. 3

(5) Transmigration of Souls

Vivekananda uses the verses "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58) and "This is Elijah which is to come" (Matt. 11:14) to support a doctrine of pre-existence and transmigration. The Jews may have been familiar with the idea of transmigration (cp. John 9:2), but it has no place in Christianity, and is inconsistent with the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Christianity does more than bring mukti; it abolishes the whole realm of samsara.

(6) Jnana Marga

In his devotion to Jnana Marga as the true form of "realization" Vivekananda uses the words of St. Paul at Athens in Acts 17:23(A.V.), - "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you" - as implying that in Paul's message was the true jnana. His implication is that even the ignorant can be saved through knowledge of the self, which is one with the God of the Vedanta.

It is clear that Christian knowledge is something very different from jnana. It is not acquired knowledge, but an intimate, personal knowing, a relationship with God through Christ.⁽¹⁾

(7) Asceticism

Vivekananda quotes a variety of texts - "Thy will be done" (Matt. 6:10); "The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (Matt.8:20); "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor" (Matt.19:21), etc. - to indicate the importance of the idea of renunciation or asceticism:

"The false 'I' is to be killed so that the real 'I' may appear. Only a process of complete renunciation and self-abnegation and detachment from the world can lead to successful God-realization."⁽²⁾

Protestant Christianity in India has perhaps been too inclined to neglect the clear teaching of Jesus on self-denial. And yet the altruistic purpose behind such self-denial in Christianity is quite different from that of the asceticism of the karma yoga, which is devoted purely to self-development. Yet Swami

(1) For a discussion of Christian jnana, v. infra p.308.

(2) Chandran op.cit. p. 181. Compare the discussion on ahamkara and atman above, p.65.

Vivekananda did have high ideals of self-renunciation linked to service, - derived to some extent, perhaps, from the work of Christian missions - and his call to self-denial should be taken seriously. As Dr. Chandran says:

"Asceticism by itself is no Christian virtue. It is seen to have value only in the light of God's redemptive purpose."⁽¹⁾

Vivekananda died at the early age of 40 in 1902. He had served himself heir to both Ramakrishna and the Brahma Samaj, both of whose ideas were taken up and popularized by him. In relation to Christianity his attitude was to profess the equality of all religions, while at the same time trying to force Christianity into the mould of his own thought. He acted on the assumption that advaita monism was the key to the exegesis and evaluation of the Christian Scriptures - a principle carried out in practice in the two Biblical commentaries published by his disciple, Sri Parananda. Many of his attitudes have since become the stock-in-trade of Hindu apologetic, and not a few of them have at times made an entry into the very citadel of Christian theology itself.

4. Sri Parananda's Commentaries

In 1898 there was published, in England, a full-scale commentary on St. Matthew's Gospel, by a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, Sri Parananda.⁽²⁾ This was followed in 1902 by an exposition of the Fourth Gospel,⁽³⁾ in which "the writer makes John out to be a Hindu following the Saiva Siddhanta doctrine."⁽⁴⁾ It is worth while to give some attention to Sri Parananda's method of work, as an indication of the way in which attempts have been made to give a thorough-going Hindu interpretation to the Bible, as distinct from all Christian attempts to give a distinctively "Indian" interpretation.

(1) Chandran op. cit. p. 182.

(2) The Gospel of Jesus, according to St. Matthew; as interpreted to R.L. Harrison by the Light of the Godly Experience of Sri Parananda. (London, Kegan Paul, 1898).

(3) An Eastern Exposition of St. John (London, 1902).

(4) A.J. Appasamy: Christianity as Bhakti Marga p.18.

An examination of Parananda's commentary on Matthew reveals the fact that this is not really a straight exposition of the text, but an attempt to make the Gospel conform to the pattern of Vivekananda's advaita teaching. Where the text cannot be made to yield a Hindu meaning it is declared to be unsound. The whole Commentary is an interesting example of the attempt to make the Christian Gospel a part of Hinduism; to absorb and reinterpret it, not merely in an Indian manner, but as part of the Hindu system.

According to this interpretation, Jesus was a great Teacher of Wisdom, who himself had acquired his knowledge from some unnamed "Teacher" who had come "in the name of God".⁽¹⁾ By means of his teaching of Wisdom, and his demonstration of the practice of yoga, he was able to lead his disciples towards that Union with God where all particularity is left behind. As the spirit of the individual man advances along the path of knowledge it becomes indistinguishable from, and indeed identical with Christ Himself, and so in turn is identified with the Father, the very Absolute. The chief end of man is therefore the attainment of perfect peace and calm in union with the Absolute, and this state of union is in fact the meaning of the Kingdom of God. Jesus, as one with the soul of man and with God, could not, and indeed did not die. On the Cross he went into a state of suspended animation, from which after three days he emerged, so that Death and Resurrection refer only to entry into an emergence from the state of samadhi.

The method of exegesis can best be seen from a few examples.

(1) Religion as Experience rather than History (On Matt. chaps. 1 and 2)

"The true exponents of Jesus have little to do with history, but everything with doctrine, and you will find that the teachings of Jesus, so far as they are recorded in the holy books, stand on the firm ground of actual experience, and are verifiable by those who by native disposition and previous culture are sympathetic enough to persevere in all earnestness and faith in the way ordained by those who have become sanctified in spirit."

The implication here is that the historicity of Jesus is of little or no account, and that only those can truly understand his significance who have

(1) Comment on Matt. 27:50.

experience of the advaita tradition of Hinduism.

(2) The ultimate Identity of the Spirit of Man, Christ and the Absolute.

On Matt. 16, 23: (Peter's rebuke to Jesus for the suggestion that He must suffer and die).

"The spirit in isolation is called Son of God or Christ. And the spirit in attachment is called Adam...Peter ought to have known that it was the subtle body of Jesus that was going to suffer, and that the Christ in Jesus could neither suffer nor die."

On Matt. 11, 27: (No man knoweth the Son but the Father, etc.)

"By man is meant the senses and thought in the human body, as distinct from the consciousness (or soul).... Consciousness, or the true Self, or the True ego, or the Soul, or the Spirit - for these are all synonymous terms - knows the senses and thoughts, but the senses and thoughts are not subtle enough to know the soul, their 'Lord and Ruler'.... This great truth in spiritual experience of knowing the Soul....is precisely what Jesus propounded in v.27. For the Soul isolated from thought and the senses, he used the term 'Son'."

On Matt. 14, 33: ("Thou art the Son of God")

"It will be an error to suppose that the expression rendered in English as the Son of God excludes the possibility of there being other sons also."

Here we see clearly stated a view of the nature of union with Christ which had already been outlined by Keshub Chunder Sen,⁽¹⁾ the view that the mystical faith-union of the believer and Christ is one of identity, once the maya of ignorance has been overcome by true knowledge (jnana), and that the union of Christ and the Father is similarly one of identity.

(3) The illusory Nature of the Death and Resurrection of Christ

On Matt. 27, 50: ("Jesus...yielded up his Spirit")

"In the practice of yoga (spiritual communion) speech and breath are suspended, but such loss of animation is not death, for we resume animation after a time Jesus himself explicitly declared the truth: "I have power to lay my life ($\psi\chi\acute{\alpha}$) down, and I have power to take it again" (10.18), having learnt this art of arts from his Teacher, who came in the name of God. Therefore a more correct record would have been that "Jesus when he had cried with a loud voice seemed to die."

On Matt. 22,30: ("For in the resurrection they neither marry", etc.)

"The term resurrection or re-rising denotes a condition of the Spirit and has nothing to do with the body."

(1) v. *supra* pp. 69 ff.

On Matt. 11, 14: (This is Elijah...)

"This was the idea of transmigration of souls, included in the expression resurrection of the dead."

Here is a thorough-going attempt to eliminate the "scandal" of the Cross and Resurrection, if necessary by manipulating the text. Brahman, the Christ, and the human soul are impassible: death and resurrection are alike impossible, and the only possibility for change in the human soul is through transmigration.

(4) Absorption in the Divine as the Chief End of Man.

On Matt. 6, 12: ("Forgive us our debts")

"And let that communion be so complete as to efface all differentiating sense of 'I' and 'Thou', or of obligations left undone by debtor and creditor, and make me one with Thee."

On Matt. 11, 28: ("I will give you rest")

"Rest. This is identical with Peace. When thoughts run down to a perfect calm and sleep does not intervene, Peace of the Kingdom of God is attained."

(5) Knowledge (jnana) as the Way of Salvation

On Matt. 3, 11: ("He shall baptize you with the fire of the Holy Spirit")

"..... He shall enlighten you by true teaching."

On Matt. 20, 28: ("To give his life a ransom for many")

"This figure employed by Jesus is, that he taught the soul its condition of captivity and awakened in it a desire for freedom and then gave his own body to the captor as a consideration for the release of the soul. All this figurative language means that in order that 'lost' souls may regain the Kingdom of God, he had to teach them objectively (by sanctifying his life) the subjective truth that self-effacement, or forsaking all the rudiments of the flesh, was essential to obtain God."

On Matt. 26, 26 ("Eat, this is my body")

"The terms 'eat' and 'drink' are used here in the same sense of, not consuming but tasting and knowing. To eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son is simply to know the Son (Matt. 11, 27) thoroughly, as a matter of actual experience."

These passages are the nearest that Parananda comes to a doctrine of the Atonement. The suffering of Christ is merely an object-lesson to teach us the truth of the necessity for "self-effacement", or the forsaking of the "flesh". As we progress in knowledge (jnana) we leave behind the body and its distractions,

and so, finding unity with the Absolute, "regain the Kingdom of God". We are reminded of Keshub Chunder Sen's teaching on the "self-abegnation" of Christ reflected in the believer. (1)

(6) Jesus as the "Master-Yogin". (2)

On Matt. 4, 2:

"The words 'to be tempted of the devil' appear to be a gloss of an ignorant student which has been copied by mistake into the text. Jesus retired to the wilderness and communed with God for forty days and forty nights, 'dead to the world and alive to God' (Romans 6,11), being deep in yoga (spiritual communion)."

On Matt. 26, 38-46: (Gethsemane)

"...His object was that he and his three disciples should throw themselves into the Yogic state, in the hope that when their spirits were kept clear of the obstructions of thought and sleep, some one or more of them would receive a communication from the Deity as to the prayer in question."

Here again it can be seen how lightly Sri Parananda sits to the text of Scripture: any fact, such as the reality of the Satanic temptation, which does not fit his scheme of things, can be rejected as an interpolation or gloss. The whole Judaeo-Christian tradition is against the view that Jesus was a yogi in the accepted sense of that term in India.

(7) Karma and Transmigration

On Matt. 11,14: ("This is Elijah")

"This was the idea of transmigration of souls, included in the expression resurrection of the dead." (3)

On Matt. 26,24: ("The Son of Man goeth as it is written...")

"Jesus explains the doctrine of karma or judgment according to works."

These passages make sufficiently clear the fact that Parananda is not interested in finding the correct interpretation of the Bible, but rather in imposing on it the structure of advaita theory and practice. This fact is made very clear in his exposition of the passage on the keys of the Kingdom (Matt. 16,19), where he gives his own entirely un-Biblical explanation of the meaning of

(1) v. supra p. 68.

(2) The title is used by Ramakrishna, v. supra p. 166.

(3) Vivekananda interpreted this passage in the same way, v. supra p. 175.

the two keys, the first being "a proper appreciation under due instruction" of certain truths of advaita teaching, and the second being "a knowledge of the methods of withdrawing or isolating the soul from its carnal elements."

We can see, therefore, that Perananda's commentaries are not in fact Christian commentaries at all, but rather attempts to prove that Christianity is in fact nothing other than a demonstration of advaita Hinduism, fully capable of absorption within the Hindu system. It is somewhat of a relief to turn to another thinker who, though no less "Indian" than those we have been studying, yet approached the Christian faith from within, and, starting from a deep personal experience of Christ and the Church, sought to work out a theology in Indian terms.

CHAPTER VIII

NOTHING BUT THE HIGHEST: BRAHMABANDHAB UPADHYAYA (1861-1907)

We have so far considered the theology of a number of Hindu thinkers who took it upon themselves to give their own interpretation of Christianity, and have also seen something of the negative reaction by Christian theologians like Nehemiah Goreh, who were convinced that there could be no compromise between Hinduism and the Christian faith. We turn now to one who, converted in his youth from Hinduism to Christianity, yet retained an affection for the philosophy in which he had been reared, and attempted to use it as the vehicle for a truly Indian interpretation of the Christian Gospel. His story is one full of interest.

Bhavani Charan Banerji,⁽¹⁾ a Bengali of Brahman descent, was born in 1861. As a boy he came under the influence of Keshub Chunder Sen, whom he later affirmed to be the greatest man that modern India had produced.⁽²⁾ From early boyhood he became attached to the Person of Christ, and his love was nurtured by his contacts at the General Assembly's Institution in Calcutta, where he studied, and by his intimacy with Sen and P.C. Mozoomdar.⁽³⁾ Another Christian influence in his early life was that of his uncle, the well known Rev. Kali Charan Banerji, one of the earliest and greatest Christian nationalists in Behal.⁽⁴⁾ In 1887 he became a member of the Church of the New Dispensation.

In 1888 at the age of twenty-seven he went as a Brahmo teacher to Hyderabad

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- (1) B. Animananda: The Blade: Life and Work of Brahmanbandhab Upadhyaya. Roy & Son, Calcutta 14 (n.d. probably c.1947) (BA)
A. Vāth, S.J.; Im Kampfe mit der Zauberwelt des Hinduismus. F. Dummlers, Berlin, 1928 (AV)
F. Heiler: The Gospel of Sundar Singh, (London, 1927) pp. 248 ff. (GSS)
F. Heiler: Christliche Glaube und Indisches Geistesleben, (München, 1926) pp. 65-79
(2) BA 27.
(3) BA 31.
(4) BA 9. op. B.R. Barber, Kali Charan Banerji, (SPCK, Madras, 1912)

in Sindh, and there, chiefly through his friendship with two C.M.S. missionaries, Redman and Heaton, gradually became convinced of the truth of the Resurrection of Christ and his co-eternal Sonship.⁽¹⁾ He was baptised by Mr. Heaton on 26th February, 1891, affirming at the same time that he did not thereby join the Church of England.⁽²⁾ Even before his baptism Banerji had had contact with the Roman Catholic Church, and had read some Roman books. Before the end of 1891 he became a Roman Catholic, being given conditional baptism, and choosing the name "Theophilus", which he translated as "Brahmabandhab".⁽³⁾

Even before his open confession of Christianity he had been deeply interested in what he felt to be the possibility of reconciling "pure Hinduism and pure Christianity" -

"To preach Christ as the Eternal Son of God, as the Logos in all prophets and saints before and after his Incarnation, and as the incarnate perfect Righteousness by whose obedience man is made righteous."⁽⁴⁾

This idea he admits to be the direct fruit of the influence of Sen, many of whose theological ideas we shall later recognize in the work of Upadhyaya. From his earliest days as a Christian his deep knowledge of Hinduism, and especially of the Vedants, led him to study the Christian revelation in connection with the deepest insights of Hinduism, and, unlike Nehemiah Goreh, he became convinced that the best way of bringing home the Christian faith to Indian thinkers was by using the categories of the Vedants. He writes:

(1) BA 36

(2) A similar reluctance to accept the consequences of membership in a particular Church is seen in Sundar Singh and Manilal C. Parekh.

(3) "Brahmabandhab" = "Friend of Brahman". We give the Bengali form of his name which is that used by his friend and biographer Animananda. Upadhyaya shows here his preference for the Sanskrit word "Brahman" (the unqualified Absolute) for God. The name Theophilus was chosen because Upadhyaya's instructor was Fr. Theophil Ferrig, S.J., and later when Upadhyaya discovered that Theophilus of Antioch was the first writer to use the word "Trinity" (Trias) for the Godhead he was especially pleased, as the summit of his own theology lay in the triune description of God as sat, cit, ananda. BA 36, AV 79.

(4) BA 38. These words were written while he was still a Brahm.

"Indian thought can be made just as useful to Christianity as Greek thought has been to Europe." "The truths of the Hindu philosopher must be 'baptized' and used as stepping stones to the Catholic Faith.... The European clothes of the Catholic religion should be laid aside as soon as possible. It must assume the Hindu garment which will make it acceptable to the people of India. This change can only be effected by Indian missionary Orders who preach the Sacred Faith in the language of the Vedanta."⁽¹⁾

In pursuit of this aim, Upadhyaya began plans for founding an order of "Hindu Catholic" ascetic monks. Before this, however, he had immersed himself deeply in the study of Roman Catholic theology, wrestling with the teaching of Aquinas, and entering into correspondence with well-known theologians in England as well as in India, in order to test the orthodoxy of his own position. At the same time he found an outlet for his gifts as a teacher and leader of men, and began that journalistic activity which was to be such a characteristic feature of his life.

In 1894 he donned the ochre robe of a sannyasi, seeking and eventually obtaining the permission of the authorities of his Church, although he did not belong to any order, nor was he ordained as a priest.⁽²⁾ In the same year he founded the monthly journal Sophia,⁽³⁾ which continued till 1899, and gave him an opportunity for expressing his views. The name Sophia was carefully chosen to indicate the true Wisdom of God, seen in Christ the Logos, who alone can lead the wise to true Wisdom.⁽⁴⁾ This was a highly creative period of Upadhyaya's life. He travelled and lectured, defending the Christian faith against the attacks of Theosophy, developing his own distinctive explanation of doctrine in terms of Vedantic thought-forms, and giving himself in love and self-sacrifice to the education of his people and the service of the poor and needy. At this period

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- (1) GSS 248. Compare the plan of Goreh and Smith as early as 1853. v. supra p. 89. Brahmabandhab was familiar with the work of De Nobili.
(2) It was at this stage that he began to use the name Brahmabandhab. BA 58.
(3) Published in English in Karachi.
(4) Every number of Sophia carried on the inside of the cover a series of quotations from Wisdom 7:7 f; 10:9,11,13,17 f. AV 89

his relations with the Church authorities were cordial, and he was encouraged to proceed with his work and follow up and publish his ideas.

He was already a Christian sannyasi with a few like-minded companions, but he longed to establish a matha (monastery) which might become a centre for new spiritual power, a source of Christian life which was yet closely linked with the old Hindu ideal of a group of ascetics living together in poverty and following a life of contemplation and study. Here there would be an opportunity to express the heart of the Christian faith in a new way, using terms and concepts and practices which would attract and win the Hindu world instead of alienating it like so much of the missionary work of the West. He found a site near the narrow gorge of the Marble Rocks on the River Narmada at Jabalpur, and looked forward eagerly to the beginning of the experiment.

"Here in the midst of solitude and silence will be reared up true Yogis to whom the contemplation of the Triune Saccidananda will be food and drink. Here will grow ascetics who will, in union with the sufferings of the God-man, do penance for their own sins as well as for the sins of their own countrymen, by constant bewailing and mortification. Here will be trained the future apostles of India.... In this hermitage will the words of the Eternal Word be strung in the hymns of Eastern melody; in this holy place will the transcendent Catholic devotions be clothed in Hindu garb. Here on the banks of the classic river, will the children of India sit at the feet of the Angelic and the Seraphic Doctors to drink deep of Divine Science; here will the Vedanta Philosophy be assimilated to universal truth".⁽¹⁾

The monastery was started in 1899. But official opposition to Upadhyaya's views was growing within the Roman Church. It was felt that he was going too fast, that the scheme was ill-advised and not sufficiently carefully thought out. No ecclesiastical approval was given, and the plan was dropped.⁽²⁾ It was the beginning of a conflict with the Church authorities which was to become more and more painful, and end only with the death of Upadhyaya.

(1) BA 78.

(2) BA 80.

In 1900 Upadhyaya moved from Jabalpur to Calcutta, and threw himself once more into educational and journalistic work. To this period belongs his close association with the great poet Rabindranath Tagore. The two men were almost of an age and Upadhyaya gave Tagore much help and encouragement in his writing, and in the development of his famous ashram of Santiniketan. Upadhyaya's enthusiastic and impetuous temperament, however, could not find a permanent resting place with the more placid Tagore, and they soon parted.⁽¹⁾ In Calcutta, Upadhyaya began a new paper, a weekly to which he gave the name Sophia, and in which he once more gave expression to his rapidly developing thoughts. Whereas at first he had tended to use the Vedanta in an eclectic way, and had at times argued against the possibility of using Sankara's non-dualism as an instrument for ^{the} expression of Christian doctrine⁽²⁾ he now turns more and more to Sankara as representing Vedantic teaching at its highest, and attempts the very difficult task of an alliance between Christian truth and advaita philosophy. It is in this effort that some of his most brilliant and profound thought can be seen.

At the same time, however, another interest was emerging which was to have serious repercussions on his theological activity. A man of his deep patriotism could scarcely avoid being drawn into the developing national struggle, and indeed Upadhyaya threw himself into the movement with all the fervour of his nature. He rapidly became a leader, and the weekly Sophia more and more became a vehicle for his political writings. Outside Christian circles today, most Indians remember him chiefly as a patriot, one of the first, if not the first, to have advocated complete political independence for India.

(1) For a theological assessment of Tagore see S. Estborn: The Religion of Tagore, in the Light of the Gospel (CLS, Madras, 1949).

(2) Vāth gives examples of his earlier opposition to Sankara's Monism. AV 102, 139; BA 82; Heiler (GSS 248) and others (e.g. Dr. J.R. Chandran, op.cit.) have therefore assumed that Upadhyaya's attempt was at the adaptation of Ramanuja. In fact, however, his most important work (which Vāth so heavily criticises) is his use of Sankara's philosophy.

One result of this political activity, and also of some of his theological tendencies, was a widening of the rift between him and his Church. The weekly Sophia was banned for Catholics. Upadhyaya gave it up, and started another paper, The Twentieth Century, but this too came under the ban. It was a position in which it was difficult for him to do constructive theological thinking, immersed as he was in political activity.

In 1902-03 he paid a visit to Europe, living as a sannyasi, and spending his time mainly in England. Though he found friends in Oxford and Cambridge, as well as in London, where he met Von Hügel, his European experiences tended only to increase the bitterness which he felt against the West for its political, cultural and intellectual domination of his country. After his return to India his political activity steadily increased, and he now began yet another paper, this time a daily evening newspaper in Bengali, called Sandhya, which became immensely influential because of the vividness of Upadhyaya's language and style, and the outspokenness of his political comment.

Some of his activities at this period made even his closest Indian Christian friends doubt his orthodoxy, while his missionary acquaintances more or less took it for granted that he had severed his connection with the Church. In a school which he ran for Hindu boys he encouraged the pupils to take a part in the veneration of Sarasvati, the goddess of learning.⁽¹⁾ He also defended the propriety of Hindus worshipping Krishna as an avatara, though he maintained a clear distinction between an avatara and the unique Incarnation of Christ. Finally he took part in a ceremony of prayascitta, or ritual atonement, in repentance for the "defilement" which he had incurred by travelling overseas and eating food with foreigners.⁽²⁾ Some of his Christian friends assumed that by this ceremony he intended to leave the Christian

(1) Compare Sen's "rationalization" of Hindu mythology. v. supra p. 49.

(2) He defines prayascitta as removing social rather than religious defilement, "It is making the unclean clean, the impure pure, imposing upon guilty persons certain social chastisements." BA 160

faith and return to Hindu society.

Yet Upadhyaya himself maintained that he remained a Christian, and gave clear explanations for each of these acts. They are explanations which would carry very little weight with any Church authorities then or now, and yet they deserve deep study, and must also be scrutinized in the light of the very acute political tensions of the period, when Upadhyaya felt that it was his God-given duty to share the affliction of his Hindu fellow-citizens, whose whole national, cultural and religious identity was, he felt, being threatened. As we shall see in more detail later,⁽¹⁾ he felt that he was culturally a Hindu, while being at heart a Christian. In Europe he had seen statues and pictures of the Muses and Graces; why should not Sarasvati, as the figure of Learning personified, be venerated by Hindu pupils in an institution of learning? So too Krishna is seen, not as the Love-God of popular Hinduism, but as a historical figure from Indian history, and as the mouthpiece of the sublime teaching of the Gita, who has a true message for the people of India. The ceremony of prayascitta - which even in those days was performed by very few Indians returning from abroad - was regarded by him as necessary to purify himself socially in the eyes of his fellow-countrymen, from his association with those foreigners who were the declared enemies of all that he held dear. For him it had no implication of re-admission into the Hindu religion, though it did indeed mark his ritual re-entry into a society from which he had perhaps felt himself cut off.⁽²⁾

On 10 September, 1907 Upadhyaya was arrested by the Government, on a charge of sedition. He appeared in court, not in "the saffron garb of liberty",⁽³⁾ but in a plain Bengali dress, and wearing the sacred thread of a Brahman to indicate his

(1) v. infra pp. 193 ff.

(2) Compare P.D. Devanandan on "cultural kinship" with Hinduism, infra p. 523.

(3) BA 169.

solidarity with Hindu Society. Shortly afterwards he entered hospital for a hernia operation, and although the operation seemed successful, complications set in, and he died in hospital, still a free man, on 27 October, 1907, at the age of 46.

Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya is a towering, stormy figure, who is universally acclaimed as one of the early heroes of the independence movement in Bengal. What of his theological achievement? Today he is little known in Protestant circles. He crossed swords with J.N. Farquhar in 1904 over the question of the nature of Krishna's avatara.⁽¹⁾ Heiler gave him high praise, and blames the Roman Catholic Church for supressing his creative activity and driving him into strange paths. The study of Fr. Alfons Vâth, S.J., gives a fairly sympathetic picture of Upadhyaya, particularly in the years up to 1899, but asserts that after that a change came over him, carrying him away on the current of his impulsive nature into violent political nationalism, into an unnatural alliance with Sankara's advaita, into strange compromises with Hinduism, and into a final and tragic break with the Church. Upadhyaya's friend and disciple Animananda, who at his death in 1945 left behind the fullest account in English of his master,⁽²⁾ believed completely that he remained a Christian to the end, and was able to quote much evidence in support of his views.

Today we can perhaps look at the matter more dispassionately than did Vâth. Despite Heiler's advocacy, it seems unlikely that any Protestant Church would have given Upadhyaya more sympathetic treatment than did the Roman Catholic, though perhaps, like Sundar Singh, he might have found an unhindered field for service as a wandering sannyasi had he not felt bound to seek approval from the heirarchy.

(1) BA 123.

(2) The Blade. Animananda always remained within the organised Church.

Yet Vāth is much too critical. He feels that Upadhyaya went too fast and attempted too much, that at every stage he should have sought approval for his views, and should have realised that the task of adapting the Vedānta as a vehicle for the Christian faith is one that demands the prolonged effort of many theologians rather than the inspired effort of an individual, however perceptive he may be.

Yet surely such an opinion would spell the death of all efforts at new and constructive theology. There is much about the personality of Brahmabandhab which reminds one of Luther, and one man can make great changes in the thinking of the whole Church. Vāth's verdict is that Brahmabandhab failed; failed in his attempt to create a new Christian theology, failed even to found a new secular school of purified Vedāntic thought.⁽¹⁾ Yet perhaps time will show that Upadhyaya succeeded. It is not that he has produced a definite Summa Theologica, but that rather he has - like Bonhöffer, whose work was left similarly incomplete - begun new lines of thought and suggested new possibilities of interpreting the Christian Gospel in an Indian setting, which will increase in their influence and importance as time goes on.⁽²⁾ It remains for us to examine his teaching on a number of Christian doctrines in order to understand what the task was which he undertook, and how far he succeeded in accomplishing it.

1. The Relationship of Christianity to Hinduism.

a. To Christ through the Vedānta

We shall first of all briefly consider Upadhyaya's relation to Hinduism,

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- (1) AV 216. Vāth's idea is that a purely philosophical reconstruction and "purification" of the Vedānta philosophy might ultimately produce a suitable vehicle for Christian theology.
- (2) Even within the Roman Catholic Church the influence of Brahmabandhab is seen in the work of J. Monchanin, R. Panikkar and others. v. *infra* pp. 557, 565.

as an understanding of this will make his theology easier to follow. We have already seen how in his youth he was a great admirer of Keshub Chander Sen. He believed that Sen had been truly Christ-centred, but thought that his successors in the Church of the New Dispensation had deserted his teaching.⁽¹⁾ Upadhyaya similarly felt, not that all religions were equal, as Vivekananda was preaching, but that in Christ, and in him alone, all religions must find their fulfilment, and so be reconciled. He writes:

"We mean to preach the reconciliation of all religions in Christ whom we believe to be perfectly divine and perfectly human. O for the blessed day when India will accept Christ as perfectly divine and perfectly human and be built 'upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets' (of all ages and climes), 'Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into a holy temple in the Lord,' and thus fulfil the glorious mission of Keshava Chandra Sen."⁽²⁾

Christianity, Upadhyaya felt, had come to India, or at least to Bengal, as a Western religion, with its purity hidden under a series of unfamiliar terms and structures. But these Western forms were neither the only possible forms, nor were they final:

"The development of the Christian religion has not come to an end. It will grow, blossom and fructify till the end of time. Indian soil is humid and its humidity will make the ever-new Christian Revelation put forth newer harmonies and newer beauties, revealing more clearly the invincible integrity of the Universal Faith deposited in the Church by the Apostles of Jesus Christ. The Hindu mind and heart, coming under the dominion of the One, Holy, Apostolic and Catholic Church, will sing a new canticle which will fill the earth with sweetness from end to end."⁽³⁾

We can see here how convinced Upadhyaya is that the "integrity" of the faith committed to the Church must not be tampered with. It is rather the

(1) BA 39.

(2) BA 40. There is a real continuity between the work of Sen and that of Upadhyaya, who believed that Sen would eventually become a Christian (v. supra p. 52 footnote), and in some ways regarded himself as his successor and spiritual heir.

(3) BA 68.

Western explication of that "deposit" which is misleading, and which should be replaced by an Indian thought system, expressing itself through Indian institutions. It is interesting to find that after Upadhyay's death a Baptist friend and sometime opponent of his stoutly maintained that to the end he had remained faithful to these ideals. Here is the testimony of that friend, the well-known Rev. Bimlananda A. Nag:

"He firmly believed that the finale of Vedantism was faith in Christ, the Son of God, and if in his lifetime he succeeded in giving a true conception of Vedantic Theism, he would believe he had laid the foundation of the future Christianity in India He explained that at present Christians were ignoring and opposing Hindu thought in its philosophical and social aspects, and that he believed that this was suicidal on the part of the Christians."⁽¹⁾

He believed, in short, that

"Hindu thought may be made to serve the cause of Christianity in the same way in India as Greek thought was made to do in Europe"⁽²⁾

and in pursuit of this ideal he turned - after an initial period of rejection - to what he saw as the highest point of the Vedantic system, the complete non-dualism of Sankara. Thoroughly grounded as he was in Roman scholasticism, he felt that Aquinas was inadequate in the Indian situation. He writes:

"Our missionary experiences have shown us how unintelligible the Catholic doctrines appear to the Hindus when presented in scholastic garb. The Hindu mind is extremely subtle and penetrative, but is opposed to the Greco-Scholastic method of thinking. We must fall back on the Vedantic method, in formulating the Catholic religion to our countrymen. In fact the Vedanta must be made to do the same service to the Catholic faith in India as was done by the Greek philosophy in Europe."⁽³⁾ The assimilation of the Vedantic Philosophy should not be opposed because it contains certain errors. Were not Plato and Aristotle guilty of monumental errors? Catholic Philosophy is so sweet, so transcendent, but it repels our countrymen because of its alien dress."⁽⁴⁾

(1) BA. 185.

(2) BA. Appendix I p. iv.

(3) op. BA. 67 (Sophia July 1897) "Shall we, Catholics of India, now have made it /Hindu philosophy/ their (i.e. the Hindus') weapon against Christianity or shall we look upon it in the same way as St. Thomas looked upon the Aristotelian system? We are of opinion that attempts should be made to win our Hindu philosophy to the service of Christianity as Greek Philosophy was won over in the Middle Ages.."

(4) BA 74.

b. Hindu Culture and Hindu Religion

This then was Upadhyaya's task, and we shall shortly see how he attempted it in the field of various doctrines. But first we must turn to another very important issue, his view of the relationship of Hindu culture to Hindu religion. He was convinced that it was possible to be a Hindu and a Christian at the same time, yet by this he did not imply a process of syncretism but rather a separation of religious from cultural Hinduism. He writes very explicitly:

"In short, we are Hindus so far as our physical and mental constitution is concerned, but in regard to our immortal souls we are Catholic. We are Hindu Catholics."⁽¹⁾ And again, "The test of being a Hindu cannot therefore lie in religious opinions."⁽²⁾

Writing towards the end of his life in Sandhya he says:

"Our dharma has two branches: samaj dharma and sadhan dharma⁽³⁾.... We are Hindus. Our Hinduism is preserved by the strength of samaj dharma. While the sadhan dharma is of the individual, its object is sadhan and muktee (Salvation). It is a hidden thing and one to be meditated upon. It has no connection whatever with society. It is a matter known to the guru and shisha⁽⁴⁾ only. A Hindu, so far as sadhan goes, can belong to any religion."⁽⁵⁾

Upadhyaya is here writing at a time when he was deeply involved in the national struggle, and felt impelled to identify himself as fully as possible with his country, Hindustan, the land of the Hindus.⁽⁶⁾ We may quarrel with this conception of the separation of a man's religion and his life in society. And yet there is a very important point at issue, for he is saying in effect that it is possible to accept

(1) BA 72.

(2) BA 71.

(3) dharma can be translated by 'religion' or 'duty'. Samaja dharma is 'social obligation' and sadhana dharma refers to religious life.

(4) i.e. master and disciple.

(5) BA 200. It must be admitted that Upadhyaya's attitude to 'caste' - like that of de Nobili - was unsatisfactory. He writes: "Samaj Dharma is the strength of Hinduism and the Caste System is its foundation". (BA.201). He himself never forgot that he was a 'Brahman' and when entering hospital before his death in 1907 entered 'Brahman' in the column for 'Caste' in the Hospital Register, but left the column for 'religion' blank. (BA 173) Again he writes, "The time is now come, if the universal character of the religion of Christ is to be demonstrated to our fellow-brethren to show in a reasonable way that, in matters of faith, we are above time and space, neither ^{Indian} nor European, but in matters other than those of faith, we are essentially Hindu in the strictest sense of the word." (BA 201.) His Hindu friends at least understood this to mean submission to the laws of varna asrama dharma (the caste system) BA 202.

(6) It should be noted that many Indian Christians dislike the name "Hindustan" because it means "land of the Hindus", and prefer to say simply "Hind" or "Bharat".

cultural Hinduism, without accepting it as religious truth. There is a clear parallel in the development of Greek culture. Originally it was closely linked with Greek religion. Gradually the bonds were loosened, philosophy became a separate discipline, mythology became part of literature rather than religion, and finally Greek religion died, while cultural Hellenism, philosophic, scientific, literary and artistic, merged with the Christian tradition, and is still very much alive today. May it not be that Upadhyaya has here for the first time isolated a fact of the utmost importance for the development both of the Christian Church and of Indian - of Hindu - culture?⁽¹⁾

2. The Doctrine of God and of the Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity is so closely linked with Upadhyaya's understanding of the nature of God that it seems best to consider together what Western systematic theology sometimes separates. We shall at the same time have to say something about Christology also, though this will be treated later in isolation and in greater detail.

a. Saccidananda:

We must remember that Upadhyaya had grown up in the tradition of the Brahma Samaj in which, ever since the time of Ram Mohan Roy, God had been described by the neuter word Brahman, which signifies the unconditioned Absolute, beyond all qualifications, and beyond even the concept of personality. As we have seen, however, this conception of God had been greatly developed by Keshub Chunder Sen, who had been convinced that in Jesus of Nazareth we see the God-man, divine humanity, and who had in consequence seized upon the loftiest attempt of the Vedanta to describe Brahman, the conception of Brahman as Being, Intelligence and Bliss (sat,cit,ananda), and found in this an inspired interpretation of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Upadhyaya, who had chosen the name Brahmabandhab (friend of Brahman) for himself, eagerly seized upon this conception as providing a key for the fulfilment of his

(1) Compare Devanandan's discussion of secularism. v. infra p. 521.

great desire to reconcile Hinduism and Christianity in the Person of Christ. His study of Western Christian theology went much deeper than Sen's, and both before and after his conversion he had made a detailed study of Roman Scholastic theology, which he appears to have accepted in its entirety.⁽¹⁾ He was a man with a very wide-ranging and synthetic mind, and the order and completeness of the Thomist system appealed to him greatly, while making him long for a similarly comprehensive, and fully Christian system which would discard Thomism's Western thought-pattern. We must not be surprised, therefore, if we find that his fascinating and penetrating use of the Vedanta is based ultimately on a theological structure which is little different from traditional scholasticism,⁽²⁾ at least in the early phases of his work.

Perhaps the best starting place for a consideration of Upadhyaya's teaching on God and the Trinity is the wonderful Hymn on the Trinity, which he wrote in Sanskrit, and which, better than all his writings, illuminates his beliefs, and shows the deep devotional spirit behind them.⁽³⁾

1.

I adore
Being, Intelligence, Bliss ⁽⁴⁾
The highest goal
Despised by the world, desired by the holy saints.
2.

I adore
The Supreme, Primeval, Highest,
Full, indivisible
Transcendent, yet immanent.

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- (1) The description of God as sat, cit and ananda has indeed a striking similarity to the Scholastic teaching on the Trinity. God the Father is pure Being (sat). The procession of the Son and Spirit is seen in terms of intellect (cit) and will (with which joy (ananda) is closely connected). cp. Aquinas: "the processions of the divine Persons are referred to the acts of intellect and will... For the Son proceeds as the word of the intellect; and the Holy Ghost proceeds as love of the will". (Summa Theol. Q.XLV. Art. 7).
 - (2) This is a criticism which applies to most attempts by Roman Catholic theologians to use Indian categories of thought. They are anchored in the 13th rather than the 1st century. cp. the work of Fr. P. Johannes and Fr. R. Panikkar. The matter will be more fully discussed later. v. infra p. 234 ff.
 - (3) This appeared along with a Sanskrit translation of the Lord's Prayer, in the monthly Sophia. Oct. 1898 (AV 134). The English translation is that given by C.F. Andrews, The Renaissance in India (London, 1912), Appendix VIII. For the Sanskrit text, see Appendix.
 - (4) i.e. saccidananda

3. I adore (1)
The One with inner relations
Holy, Self-contained,
Self-conscious, incomprehensible
4. I adore (2)
The Father, Highest Lord, Unbegotten,
The rootless Principle of the Tree of Existence,
Who creates through Intelligence
5. I adore (3)
The Son, uncreate, Eternal Word, Supreme,
The image of the Father, whose Form is Intelligence,
Giver of the highest Release. (4)
6. I adore (5)
The Spirit proceeding from Being and Intelligence,
The Blessed Breath, intense Bliss, and Sanctifier,
Swift in movement, speaking through the Word, (6)
The Giver of Life.

This is a magnificent hymn, and the deeper it is studied, the more its Christian orthodoxy stands out, despite the use of Hindu terminology. Much of the language is Scriptural, - e.g. Father, Lord, uncreated Son, Word, Image, ~~Ananda~~, Spirit, Breath, Sanctifier, Giver of Life. When the terminology is derived from Hinduism, e.g. saccidananda, "the rootless Principle of the Tree of Existence", "Giver of highest Release", "intense Bliss", - it is fully as expressive as, and indeed more vivid than the Greek or Latin-derived words which might have been used instead. The conception of saccidananda cannot exhaustively define the nature of the Trinity. But when imaginatively used as here, especially with Brahamabandhab's rich combination of ideas from Scriptural, Greek and Hindu sources, it seems definitely to provide for the Hindu a "stepping-stone" towards the full understanding

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- (1) God as Brahman is one: and yet within this unity there is the mysterious inner relationship of the Persons of the Trinity, seen as sat, cit, ananda. It is to be noted that Upadhyaya does not use an equivalent of the word Person, which is a Western concept.
 - (2) The Father, Principle of Existence, is sat (Being), and creates through the Son, cit (Intelligence).
 - (3) Christ, the Son, the Logos, the Image of the Father (Heb.1.3) has the form (rupa) of Intelligence (cit). Through Him (v.4) the work of creation was performed (cf. John 1.3).
 - (4) Christ the Logos, is also Redeemer, the one who brings Release (mukti, moksa).
 - (5) The Holy Spirit, who is ananda (Bliss) proceeds from the Father and the Son (sat and cit).
 - (6) The reference here is presumably to the written Word.

of the Christian doctrine. Indeed it throws fresh light on the doctrine for those who have been brought up purely in a Western theological tradition.

b. God as Pure Being

Upadhyaya accepts the usefulness of the traditional theistic arguments for the existence of God as "Pure Being". In a very early publication, "A Tract on the Existence of God", written in 1893 to counteract rationalistic propaganda, he writes:

"No being can modify, unfold or develop without the aid of another being distinct from itself.... The Order and Harmony of the Universe; the transition from inorganic matter to life; our ideas in their nature spiritual, and man's freedom of choice⁽¹⁾; these are wings that force our minds to soar above materialism and its facts to the regions of the spirit where alone all things become intelligible in the light of Pure Being."⁽²⁾

Upadhyaya held that logically a man must be a theist before becoming a Christian, and that a common foundation of natural theology can be laid on which the supernatural structure of the Christian faith can then be erected. In pursuit of this Thomistic aim he used the pages of the monthly Sophia to deal with questions of natural theology, such as the attributes of God, in order to pave the way for his later development of Christian truth.⁽³⁾ He "adored Eternal Wisdom, and longed to spread His Kingdom here on earth."⁽⁴⁾

It was not difficult to combine the Thomistic idea of God as Pure Being with the teaching of the Vedanta. "We hold with the Vedantists that there is one eternal Essence from which proceed all things," he wrote.⁽⁵⁾ This Pure Being is identical with the Hindu Brahman:

(1) Here the cosmological and teleological arguments are combined with Kantian arguments from the moral law and freedom.

(2) BA 52.

(3) BA 57.

(4) BA 55.

(5) BA 71.

"Brahman is Being Itself. He alone is identical with His own Being while creatures have no right of being, but have a merely participated and dependent existence."⁽¹⁾

But Brahman is very far removed from the mere abstract "Pure Being" of rationalists, or of those people influenced by English rationalistic education whom Upadhyaya calls "naturalists" and "evolutionists", and strongly attacks. They have been taught, he says, that

"there is no life of God apart from nature: God and the world make up one organism,.... Creation, in short, is a Divine necessity.... a necessary evolution of the mind of God". ⁽²⁾

In continuing his attack on Western Rationalists - and Protestants - he makes his own conception of God clearer:

"They have no conception whatsoever of a God who lives by Himself in the supreme felicity of self-colloquy without any need of entering into relationship with the finite. They always speak of God as a god of creatures, and ignore the idea of Divinity per se Protestant professors are totally oblivious of the idea that the end of man is to behold God as He is, as He lives in the abode of His Self, transcending all finite correlations. Christianity is a means to that end, and to be adequate to an end which is supernatural, it must also be supernatural."⁽³⁾

God is "Divinity per se", living in "the supreme felicity of self-colloquy". This is the Brahman of the Vedanta. And yet He is not wholly unapproachable, perfect and self-sufficient though He is. In 1901 Upadhyaya published a review of Tagore's Naivedya, a collection of 100 sonnets, which indicates his view of God as transcendent, and yet as object of human love and devotion.⁽⁴⁾ He writes:

"The keynote of the sonnets is the direct, personal relation with the Infinite. There are some who argue that as the Infinite is not easily approachable, the finite should be worshipped tentatively as the Infinite by the less spiritually-advanced. Is the Infinite really unapproachable? If it had been so, Reason would be an anomaly. The perception of the Infinite is the dawn of Reason.

The commencement as well as the culmination of Reason is the universal

(1) BA 83.

(2) Art. in The Tablet (Jan. 1903), quoted in BA App. I p. ii

(3) ibid.

(4) The review is particularly interesting as Tagore's exposition of the Vedanta tended towards Ramana's Personalism, while Upadhyaya turned rather towards Sankara. Yet Upadhyaya here finds himself in agreement with Tagore.

Boundless Reality. To be rational is to apprehend the Infinite....

The crowning idea of Naivedya is to see God in God, Unrelated, Absolute, divorced from all relations. Who does not see in this the ancient Vedantic aspiration of attaining to Nirlama Brahman (knowledge of God as He exists in Himself)? Man knows Him through relations as the great Related One, (1) but His bliss beatific does not consist in His correspondence* with His boundless expanse where all varieties are merged into an incomprehensible, synthetic unity". (2)

Upadhyaya thus turns to what he regards as the highest Hindu conception of God, that of Brahman, or parabrahman (3), or nirguna Brahman, for to accept anything less than this would for him mean an admission on the part of Christianity that it worships a God less than the all-highest. This acceptance of Sankara's view of God involves him in postulating God's impassibility. In criticising an untypical statement of Swami Vivekananda he writes:

"A changing God(?): What a shame! What a contradiction! The Hegelian School might feel satisfied with such a toy but an Indian thinker and a Swami Vivekananda!" (4)

c. Saguna and Nirguna

What then is the place of "saguna Brahman", and of the Ishvara of personal Theism? For him anything connected with saguna Brahman is definitely on a lower level than the highest religion. To this plane he relegates popular Hinduism, with its worship of one's chosen Deity (ista deva). Speaking of popular Hindu worship he writes:

"All this worship - be it good or bad - is on the level of the Saguna Upasana. (5) It is not an absolute cult rendered to creatures." (6)

(1) i.e. as saguna Brahman.

(2) BA 101, quoted from The Twentieth Century.

(3) In the Jan. 1898 number of Sophia Upadhyaya argues for the agreement between the idea of parabrahman and the Christian idea of God. AV 133 (footnote).

(4) BA 205.

(5) upasana = Adoration.

(6) BA 212. Upadhyaya is here in a sense defending popular idol-worship from the charge of "idolatry". It is not, he means, giving to a creature worship which is due to God only, but rather giving reverence to the creature as symbol of God - yet still only at the lower level of saguna upasana.

* Addendum: with creatures but in the colloquy of his depthless profundity

Those who, like Ramakrishna, and like his own erstwhile friend and contemporary Vivekananda, claimed to have a vision of God are regarded as having reached only a very low stage of religious experience, for "no man hath seen nor can see God". Such people, he says, "have a very low idea of God-vision, and mistake the realization of His Essence."⁽¹⁾ As a Roman Catholic he believes that the ultimate end of man is to pass "beyond the abstract knowledge of His Divinity" to "the immediate vision of the Divine Essence."⁽²⁾

"The greatest saint", he writes, "must rest satisfied with the knowledge of God abstracted from images and representations and in hope of the supernatural reward to come,"⁽³⁾ i.e. when in gloria we shall see God "face to face".

As there is no finality in the realm of saguna upasana, so there is no reality in the conception of Isvara, who, as the Creator or demiurge, belongs to the world of maya rather than reality. He writes:

"Ishvar, the creator of heaven and earth is Maya"⁽⁴⁾ and explains this as meaning that Isvara, the god related to the world (conceived as really related - "relations reali"), is a product of our ignorance and stupidity.⁽⁵⁾

In other words, we can never hope to find ultimate peace, to have full knowledge (jnana) of God, until we know Him as He really is, as nirguna. Any devotion or mystical union less than this is inadequate.

"How many there are who confound the imperfect, inadequate realization of the Divine Presence with the direct perception of the Divine Essence."⁽⁶⁾

(1) BA App. II, p. v.

(2) *ibid.*

(3) *ibid.* p. vi.

(4) BA 85.

(5) *ibid.*

(6) BA App. II p. vii.

d. The Trinity

It might appear that such uncompromising emphasis on the unity of the Godhead makes it impossible for us to predicate anything of God: must Christian Vedantists also say only "neti, neti"? The answer comes in Upadhyaya's understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity in terms of sat, cit, ananda. Even Sankara was prepared to describe nirguna Brahman in this way. How much richer, then, the understanding of the Godhead given through the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, as we see it expounded, for example, in his hymn which we have quoted?

As we have seen, Upadhyaya's chosen name of Theophilus or Brahmabandhab was closely associated in his mind with the doctrine of the Trinity. His biographer and disciple Animananda writes:

"The mysterious Sat-Cit-Ananda of the Rishis has been for him an earnest of the mystery of the Godhead; All-Being, All-Intelligence, All-Bliss, Unbegotten yet Begetting, Love-Encircled-Blissful Spirit. What the Rishis had guessed, Faith confirmed in a transcendent manner." (1)

Here we have a clue to his understanding of the doctrine. It is not that he is a Hindu drawing a parallel or making an equation between saccidananda and the Trinity. Rather, having come to know God in Christ, his own personal experience of God is triune, and he finds the Vedantic teaching fulfilled here in a more meaningful way than in Sankara. And so he is led to explain, for the benefit of his fellow-countrymen, the mystery of the Godhead in terms of saccidananda. This mystery can be known only through Revelation. Sankara indeed had seen^a little of the Trinity-in-Unity, but the true meaning of saccidananda is given only in the Christian Revelation. Upadhyaya gives a fairly detailed description of his understanding

(1) BA 46.

of the Trinity in a lecture delivered on 6th November, 1897.⁽¹⁾

"How does the Catholic Church, the guardian of the Divine Revelation, throw light on the secret of infinite life? How is God at the same time Knower, Lover, and yet also an Infinite Being?⁽²⁾ God thinks and by this incomprehensible act he begets a 'Thought',⁽³⁾ of the same substance as Himself, who lives with Him eternally as 'Image'; and in this unutterable dialogue between one divine Person and Another, between an unbegotten Father and a begotten Son, His life is lived utterly within the Godhead. But the begetting of the Son does not complete His holiness. From that gaze which is eternally exchanged between Father and Son springs a third focus of relationship, which proceeds from the One and from the Other, and yet is distinct from both. This is the Holy Ghost, the holy, impenetrable and pure act of divine Love. As the Son exhausts Knowledge⁽⁴⁾, in God, so the Holy Ghost exhausts Love.⁽⁵⁾ God brings forth a Thought of the same substance as Himself, and with the Thought a Love, which is of the same substance as both. Thus God is a transcendent Unity, since although there is distinction within Him yet there is no division."

It will be noted that this whole passage is very reminiscent of the language of Keshub Chunder Sen.⁽⁶⁾ It is also a very deeply Christian exposition of the idea of sat-cit-ananda, and forms a good commentary on the "Hymn of the Trinity."

Upadhyaya feels that the Vedantic teaching on God as saccidananda is true and helpful as far as it goes, but that it reaches its completion, its "Finale" only in the full Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which has been given to the Church by revelation. This doctrine, however, must be explained to Hindus in terms with which they are familiar.

"The Vedanta advanced as far as the idea of the highest Being, which is Sat, Cit, Ananda. This is the highest conception attainable by human reason.⁽⁷⁾ After this great achievement the problem of the relation

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- (1) AV 95. I have not been able to trace the original, and give here my re-translation of Vāth's German.
 - (2) "Knower" refers to cit, "Lover" to ananda, "Being" to sat.
 - (3) Thought = cit, Logos
 - (4) i.e. cit.
 - (5) i.e. Love as Joy, ananda.
 - (6) v. supra p. 54.
 - (7) It is at this point that according to Upadhyaya, the Vedanta takes human reason further than does Western philosophy, for Aquinas admits that natural reason cannot reach the knowledge of the Trinity: Impossibile est per rationem naturalem ad cognitionem Trinitatis divinarum personarum pervenire (Summa Theol. I. 32. 1).

between unity and multiplicity was not successfully solved. The solution which was brought forward, namely that multiplicity came into being from perfect Being which became imperfect,⁽¹⁾ has had spiritual and moral aberrations as its consequence. The law of contradiction, which is the basis of all human thought, is left out of reckoning in this solution. Orthodox Hinduism is full of contradictions. India cannot raise herself from her humiliation unless she accepts the right solution of the problem. It is only the Catholic Church which can give the solution."⁽²⁾

And yet, despite the failure of the Vedanta, Hindu philosophy can illuminate Christian truth, explaining it in a way which will find acceptance in India, and indeed throwing on it a light which is unknown, and needed, in the West. Upadhyaya writes in Sophia in 1897:

"The more we meditate on the cogitations of Hindu philosophy concerning the Supreme Being, on its marvellous but fruitless effort to penetrate into His inner nature.....the more light is thrown upon the ever mysterious doctrine of the One God, one yet multiple, absolute yet related within Himself, discovering in it a new fitness to appease the noblest cravings of man and satisfy the demands of the loftiest intellect."⁽³⁾

The Hindu triad of deities, trimurti,⁽⁴⁾ so often quoted by Hindus as "the Hindu Trinity", is not used by Upadhyaya as a vehicle of Christian theology.⁽⁵⁾

3. The Doctrine of Creation and the concept of Maya

The problem of Creation, of the relation of the One and the many, of God and the created world, is perhaps the most difficult in Indian philosophy. The mahavakya of the Vedanta, with the assertion tat tvam asi "thou art That", postulates the identity of the believer - and ultimately of the whole creation - with God, Brahman. The personalist school of Ramanuja solves the difficulty by describing the world as

(1) i.e. from maya. We shall see (v. infra p.205) that Upadhyaya later advances to a more positive estimate of the meaning of maya.

(2) AV 117. The quotation is from a speech "The Finale of the Vedanta" delivered in Calcutta towards the end of 1897. I give ~~me~~ a translation of Vāth's German. cp. BA 82.

(3) BA 67.

(4) i.e. Brahma the Creator; Visnu the Preserver; Siva, or Mahesvar, the Destroyer. - v. supra p. 126.

(5) In his later period, about 1904, Upadhyaya does give an exposition of the trimurti as the Hindu conception of creation, preservation and destruction at the level of the saguna. Being is One. This One may appear as many. When it does so, and is conceived as 'related' (saguna) it causes creation, preservation and destruction as Brahma, Visnu and Mahesvar. This exposition is given by Upadhyaya in connection with his explanation of avatara, but is not connected with the Christian Trinity. BA 124 ff.

being related to God as the body is to the soul, and so gives to it a definite reality, and leaves the way open for a two-way personal relationship between man and God.⁽¹⁾ Yet the major strain of Hindu thought, and the one which is most widely accepted today, is that of Sankara who holds that Brahman alone is real, and everything else is illusion, the product of maya. We - and the world - are part of Brahman, and the object of religion is that we should, through knowledge, jnana, get rid of our ignorance, avidya, which is the product of maya, and so come to know our true identity with God.⁽²⁾

In his earlier days, as we have seen, Upadhyaya felt that it was impossible to use Sankara's advaita as an instrument of Christian theology.⁽³⁾ Later, however, realizing that Sankara's system represented Hindu thought at its highest, at least in the minds of most Hindus, he decided to make the effort to use advaita as the philosophical basis of the system which he felt called to establish.⁽⁴⁾ The greatest problem facing him was that of Creation, and he tackled it boldly by giving a new and original interpretation to Sankara's teaching on maya. Vāth and others have felt that this attempt was unsuccessful, and that it took Upadhyaya far away from Christian orthodoxy. Yet it is probably the most original and penetrating contribution which he made to Indian Christian theology, and is worth careful study. Upadhyaya was determined that if Hindu philosophy were to be used "to hew wood and draw water"⁽⁵⁾ for Christian theology, then only the purest water and the strongest wood would be good enough, and those, he was convinced, were to be found in Sankara

(1) v. infra on Appasamy, p. 348.

(2) It is unrealistic to suppose, as does e.g. R.C. Zaehner, that there are great numbers who follow Ramanuja, and regard the personal God as higher than the impersonal Brahman. Advaita is undoubtedly the major strain of Hindu thought today.

(3) v. supra p. 186 footnote (2)

(4) This was a gradually developing conviction which arose about the time of the monastic experiment at Jabalpur, 1899/1900.

(5) BA 67.

rather than in any other system.

How is God related to the world? "By maya", said Sankara. "By maya, then", said Upadhyaya, and proceeded to give his own interpretation of the meaning of maya, relating it to both Hegelian and Thomist conceptions.

God, or Brahman, is sat, Being. Everything else in the world is asat, non-being. This is the traditional Vedantic position. Upadhyaya now expounds this as meaning that while God, as sat, is necessary being, the creation (asat) is not mere nothingness, but rather is being which is not self-existent, which does not necessarily exist, i.e. contingent being.⁽¹⁾ In 1899 he published in Sophia⁽²⁾ a short article entitled "Sat" in which for the first time the concept of asat is conceived

"as that which is, but has no right to be; what was, what is, but does not exist of necessity - in the language of the scholastics, a contingent being."⁽³⁾

Shortly afterwards he expounds the idea further in an article entitled "The True Doctrine of Maya":

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- (1) Animananda prints a letter of Fr. Castet (dated 10:12:1928) referring to the beginnings of Upadhyaya's thought on this point. "He wanted to explain the Catholic dogmas to Indians in the terminology of Sankara's Vedanta. We has very subtle discussions on the possibility of converting the apparent(?) Pantheism of Sankara into a Theism palatable to Catholics. He applied Hegel's distinction of being limited by non-being." BA 66-7.
- (2) Sophia V. p.150.
- (3) BA 82. It seems that Upadhyaya is here attempting to interpret the idea of creatio ex nihilo in terms which will be consistent with scholastic theology, and which will yet be acceptable, or at least intelligible, to Advaitins. "Not-being" (asat) becomes another way of saying "Nothing". The process of creation is then the emanation, caused by Being (sat), of derived being from non-being (asat). cp. Aquinas: "Idem autem est nihil quod nullum ens. Sicut igitur generatio hominis est ex non ente, quod est non homo, ita creatio, quae est emanatio totius esse, est ex non ente, quod est nihil. (Summa Theol. I. 45. 1). Upadhyaya's theory of creation is an ingenious combination of Sankara, Aquinas and Hegel.

"Maya is what St. Thomas calls "creatio passiva" - Passive Creation. It is a quality of all that is not Brahman,⁽¹⁾ and is defined by the Angelic Doctor as "the habitude"⁽²⁾ of having "being" from another and resulting from the operation" of God. (I.44. 3)... The Vedantists affirm all that is not Brahman to be Maya, in the sense of illusion, and they are right, because creatures, in themselves, apart from Brahman, are indeed darkness, falsity and nothingness (tenebrae, falsitas et nihil) as St. Thomas teaches."⁽³⁾

How then does the actual process of creation take place? Let Upadhyaya describe it in his own words.

"Brahman is Being itself. He alone is identical with His own Being⁽⁴⁾ while creatures have no right of being, but have a merely participated and dependent existence.⁽⁵⁾ They exist by Maya, that is by the habit⁽⁶⁾ of participating the Divine Being and springing from the Divine Act. Maya is a mysterious divine operation; it is neither real nor unreal. We cannot explain how the phenomenal multiplicity results from the Immutable Unity, how being is communicated to the finite, how creatures come to possess being at all. What is the nature of the "abundance" in God, of the overflow of his Being, of His desire to manifest Himself? It cannot be real in the sense of its being essential to the Divine Nature, because Brahman is self-sufficient and cannot be said to be under the necessity of being related to the finite. Nor is it unreal, for by Maya comes to exist the finite which possesses being, though not essentially - the essence of the finite not being identical with its existence. From an unreality nothing can proceed. Maya is neither real or necessary, nor unreal, but contingent."⁽⁷⁾

It is clear here that maya is something more dynamic than mere illusion. It is the divine power by which the finite, created world, which does possess being, albeit not necessary being, comes into existence. Upadhyaya thus advances a stage further and characterizes maya with the name "sakti" or Power.⁽⁸⁾

(1) i.e. of asat.

(2) "Habitudo" and "habit" in the Thomist sense of habitudō, i.e. "relation".

(3) BA 83

(4) i.e. svayambhu, ground of his own Being.

(5) This "dependent existence" is however held to be real: God in His infinite goodness and of His free will gives real being to those potential things which are present in Him as ideas. Reality is given to ideal being through the divine might. An infinite power is self-sufficient. An infinite power is all-embracing, including all existent powers in itself and excluding any independent power... The article 'I believe in God the Father, Almighty Maker of heaven and earth' is the foundation of true Theism". AV. 96 from Sophia I, 2, 9f. (my translation from Vñth).

(6) See Note (2) above.

(7) BA 83

(8) Sakti can be used quite neutrally to mean force or power, and in current Christian usage in India is one of the normal words for the Power of the Holy Spirit. In Hinduism it is frequently used to indicate the female consorts of deities, who often personify the power of those deities.

He writes:

"Maya, then is the fecund Divine Power (Sakti) which gives birth to multiplicity.... It is eternal but its operation is not essential to the being of God. By it, non-being (asat) is made being (sat). By it that which is nothingness by itself is filled with the richness of being. By it darkness is illumined with the flow of existence. It is Maya indeed."⁽¹⁾

Maya, is, then, the Divine Power which brings finite creatures into being. Yet in popular parlance maya has another, more common meaning, that of blindness or illusion, as when men say that they live under the spell of maya". Upadhyaya seeks to give a positive, Christian context even to this aspect of maya. God's creative activity ad extra projects the individual as it were outside his true self,⁽²⁾ which is to be found only in God, for "our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee." Man, in his natural, sin-bound state, finds himself separated from God, in himself and by himself.⁽³⁾ It is maya which keeps him thus apart from God, and yet it is that same maya which keeps his heart restless and makes him want to return. Thus maya has a double aspect: first creating and preserving and then

"destroying all the obstacles, our man-made pleasures, preventing the Jiva"⁽⁴⁾ from resting in himself or in anything finite."⁽⁵⁾

(1) Sophia VI 225. BA 84.

(2) BA 85.

(3) op. Devanandan's interpretation of maya, v. infra p. 516.

(4) I.E. the soul.

(5) BA 86. In his later days when he was deeply involved in the national struggle in Bengal, Upadhyaya in certain (Hindu) contexts associated sakti with the goddess Kali, who was frequently used to symbolize "the Mother" or the Motherland. This is the symbolism used in Bankim Chatterji's famous song Bande Mataram ("Reverence the Mother") whose public singing still poses problems for Christians. Animananda quotes Bipin Vihari Das Gupta, a Bengali patriot, as writing: "Upadhyaya (in Sandhya) makes constant use of the rich Sakti symbolism, that symbolism which inspired the "Bande Mataram"....He is a Christian and does not himself worship Kali, the Mother, but to his Hindu readers he interprets Kali as the symbol of God's Creative Energy, of His Providence procuring man's good even through suffering and death...Often this reverence for the Mother is just the love of the Motherland, but it is always deeply religious and thus miles apart from Western patriotism". BA 156. Western patriotism has had its cults of Britannia, la France and das Vaterland, as Radhakrishnan points out in a different context. (Eastern Religions and Western Thought, 2nd edn., p.54).

There is a sense, then, in which maya is treated as the creative power of God, and also as his prevenient Grace, which awakens in our hearts the desire to return to him. Upadhyaya does not, however, seek to identify maya with any particular Christian concept. He is rather using the concept of maya as he finds it in Sankara, and interpreting it in a way which will bring him close to the teaching of Aquinas on contingent being. As the point is an important one we shall quote a further passage in which he expounds it: ⁽¹⁾

"Vedanta.. teaches that the relation of God to the world is an unreal super-imposition.... The need for creation does not belong to the internal economy of His Being, for then, He would be dependent on effects for His existence. Eliminate His causality or impose it and He neither deteriorates nor improves in any way.

God's creatorhood is unreal, because it is, as it were, not for the purpose of His being and bliss, it is a super-imposition because it can be added to or subtracted from the Absolute without bettering or injuring the conception of Being.

This unreal super-imposition is called Maya, a principle of illusion: by it God manifests Himself to be the cause of the world without being essentially a creator. ⁽²⁾

This appears to be the Hindu conception since the Hindu believes that the Creator has passed into His creation and there is absolute identity between the two.

The Christian view is somewhat different. Maya is less than being but more than nothing. It is not Being, for then it would coalesce with the Divine Substance. It cannot be absolutely false like a barren woman's son ⁽³⁾ for it is the occasion of effects; it can be continued or blotted out without causing any disturbance in the volume of being.... The sum-total of effects is reduced to nothing when considered in essential relation to the Absolute, who is, as He is, whether there be millions of worlds or none at all.

The above conclusion of the Vedanta is in exact keeping with Catholic Philosophy, though it is expressed in a language full of Oriental imagery and the mode of demonstration is peculiarly Hindu." ⁽⁴⁾

The interpretation of maya as creatio passiva is then the vital point in Upadhyaya's attempt to restate the Christian doctrine of Creation in terms which would be familiar and intelligible to Vedantic Hindus. The attempt is, of course, open to criticism from two sides. Vāth believed that Upadhyaya was guilty of a

(1) From Tablet, (Jan. 1903). BA 207 ff.

(2) There is here, i.e. in the Vedantic view, a clear denial of creatio ex nihilo.

(3) One of the stock illustrations of the Vedanta.

(4) BA 208-9.

forced interpretation of Sankara, quite different from that accepted by all Hindus of his time.⁽¹⁾ Yet surely it is the mark of a great constructive theologian that he can take common philosophical conceptions and transform them, making them vehicles for quite new theological ideas. That, after all is, as Animamanda points out in Upadhyaya's defence, what Aquinas did to Aristotle:

"Perhaps Sankara never went the full length of Upadhyaya's reasoning. After all, Aristotle too was gently pushed by St. Thomas Aquinas. Where lies the harm if Sankara is gently pushed in the same manner?"⁽²⁾

The criticism which can be made from the other side is perhaps more valid, namely that it is sad that Brahmabandhab should have exercised so much ingenuity, and deep insight, merely to bring us to the point of departure of Aquinas. All through his expositions one feels that the Angelic Doctor looms too large, and the Bible too small. If only he had felt free to take the "deposit" of the faith as it is found in the Bible, or even in the undivided Church of the first four centuries, and then to carry out the work of a Clement or an Origen. But he felt that his mission was to be to the India of the 20th century what Aquinas was to the Europe of the 13th, and the result was undoubtedly a curtailment of what he might have achieved.

(1) AV 215. Vāth writes: Hinduism "is lacking in many ideas, notably the ideas of creation and of created being. The attempt needs to be made to naturalize these ideas in the spiritual life of India. The concept of maya should of course be reconstructed and filled with Christian content. But this procedure is quite different from that of Upadhyaya in the later stages of his development. He believed that the Christian content was already present in Sankara's Vedanta, and proceeded immediately to clothe dogma in the garb of the Vedanta. But - quite apart from the fact that his interpretation of Sankara is wrong - the fact that all the Hindus of his time gave quite a different content to the Vedantic terms than he did meant that his appropriation of classical Indian philosophy would have awakened in people's minds a false conception of dogma. A great deal of preparatory work will have to be done before the concept of maya as creative power and created being can find acceptance, and become as it were an accepted idea of the Indian philosophical world." (My translation.)

(2) BA 209

(4) The Doctrine of the Person of Christ

As with the doctrine of the Trinity, so to introduce Upadhyaya's teaching on the Person of Christ we can do no better than to give his great Sanskrit Hymn of the Incarnation,⁽¹⁾ which is so full of orthodox Christian teaching, and at the same time of Indian terminology and imagery.

HYMN OF THE INCARNATION

1. The transcendent Image of Brahma,
Blossomed and mirrored in the full to overflowing
Eternal Intelligence -
Victory to God, the God-Man. (2)
2. Child of the pure Virgin
Guide of the Universe, infinite in Being⁽³⁾
Yet beauteous with relations,
Victory to God, the God-Man.
3. Ornament of the Assembly
Of saints and sages, Destroyer of fear, Chastiser
Of the Spirit of Evil, -
Victory to God, the God-Man.
4. Dispeller of weakness
Of soul and body, pouring out life for others,
Whose deeds are holy, (4)
Victory to God, the God-Man.
5. Priest and Offerer
Of his own soul in agony, whose Life is Sacrifice,
Destroyer of sin's poison, - (5)
Victory to God, the God-Man.
6. Tender, beloved,
Soother of the human heart, Ointment of the eyes, (6)
Vanquisher of fierce death, -
Victory to God, the God-Man.

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- (1) First published in the Twentieth Century, 1901. The English translation is that given by C.F. Andrews, op.cit., Appendix VIII. For the Sanskrit text, see Appendix.
 - (2) Christ, the Image of God (Brahman) is Intelligence (cit). He is fully God, the true God-Man (Nari-Hari). "Victory" (jai) is a common Indian ascription of praise or glory.
 - (3) Christ, who is fully man, is also fully God. He is "infinite in Being" (nirguna), but also "with relations" (saguna), and so personal and knowable.
 - (4) Perhaps a contrast here to the deeds of Krishna.
 - (5) Here there is a hint of the Saivite story of Siva drinking poison to save the world.
 - (6) The reference is to collyrium, an ointment which soothes and beautifies the eyes.

Here once more one is impressed by the Christian orthodoxy of the implied theology, couched as it is largely in Hindu terminology. Christ is the Image of God (Brahman). In Him, the eternal Word (Intelligence, cit), the fullness of the Godhead dwells. He is infinite, the upholder of the Universe, and yet is born of a Virgin, and has qualities (guna) which we can know and love.

His work also is described. His deeds are holy, showing the essential connection between God and morality.⁽¹⁾ He pours out His life for others, in agony of soul, giving Himself as sacrifice; He is both Priest and Victim. He destroys the poison of sin, Himself drinking the bitter cup to the dregs, in order that He may win the victory over death, may destroy fear, and overcome Satan the Spirit of Evil. And in all this we see only His Love - "Tender, beloved, soother of the human heart."

Like many writers, Brahmabandhab is at his best when describing in poetical language, rich with Biblical and Indian concepts and image, the work of Christ. When he attempts a closer definition he is perhaps less successful. We shall look at his treatment of a number of different aspects of Christology.

(a) The Two Natures of Christ

Upadhyaya never wavers in his conviction that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He is "the transcendent Image of Brahman," and is also "Child of the pure Virgin". He is Nara-Hari the God-Man.⁽²⁾ He longs for the blessed day when

(1) Compare Gobeh on the deeds of Krishna. v. supra p. 111.

(2) Nara = man. Hari is a proper name, frequently used for the God Vishnu. It is, however, also used simply to mean "God", and it is in this sense that Upadhyaya uses it. cf. Gandhiji's use of the term "Harijan" - "people of God" for the so-called untouchables.

Upadhyaya later (e.g. in the pages of the Twentieth Century used the nom-de-plume "Naraharidas" (servant of the God-man) thereby indicating quite clearly his devotion to Christ.

He also often used the name "Thakur" (Lord) for Christ, especially in prayers addressed to Him.

India will accept Christ as perfectly divine and perfectly human".⁽¹⁾ He sees Christ as the fulfilment of all that is best in Hinduism:

"All that is noblest and best in the Hindu character, is developed in us by the genial inspiration of the perfect Narahari (God-man), our pattern and guide".⁽²⁾

(b) Logos, Cit, Sophia

The magazine Sophia was, as we have seen, dedicated to the glory of Christ as Divine Wisdom, and this title of Christ is seen reflected in the cit of sat, cit, ananda. Upadhyaya, we are told, "adored Eternal Wisdom and longed to spread His Kingdom here on earth".⁽³⁾ Writing for the students of his school in Calcutta, he says:

"God is Sat-Cit-Ananda. Every aspect of God should be worshipped, but being students we quite naturally worship in Him the aspect of Cit, Intelligence, Knowledge, Wisdom.... The Hindu pierces the veil of the world and honours in God the Intelligence that ordered the Chaos into Kosmos."⁽⁴⁾

The word "aspect" is cleared of Sabellian overtones when he writes:

"Sophia, according to the Catholic Faith, is more than an aspect of the Godhead. It is the Word of God, the Son, who became man for our sake and died for us on the Cross."⁽⁵⁾

(c) The Personality of Christ

Upadhyaya thus affirms very clearly that Christ is at the same time fully God and fully man. When he goes on to give his explanation of how the two Natures are joined in one Person he gives a very interesting excursus into Indian psychology. The final solution is not very different from that of Keshub Chunder Sen,⁽⁶⁾ but the argument is a very striking one. His disciple, Animananda writes:

(1) BA 40.

(2) BA 71.

(3) BA 55.

(4) BA 121. We can see here a somewhat oblique reference to Christ as Agent of Creation.

(5) BA 122.

(6) v. supra p. 60.

"The Son of God (Parabrahman Himself⁽¹⁾) assumed a human nature (both soul and body) into the unity of His Divine Person. As Upadhyaya puts it: 'According to the Vedanta human nature is composed of five sheaths or divisions (kosho)⁽²⁾. These five sheaths are presided over by a personality (ahampratyayi) which knows itself. This self-knowing individual (Jiva-Chaitanya) is but a reflected spark of the Supreme Reason (Kutastha-chaitanya) who abides in every man as the prime source of life and light. Jesus the Word incarnate is also composed of five sheaths but they are presided over by the Person of Logos Himself and not by any created personality (aham). The five sheaths and the individual agent, enlivened and illumined by Divine Reason, make up man. But in the God-Man the five sheaths are informed direct by the Logos-God and not through the medium of any individuality.⁽³⁾

Vāth criticizes this attempt - along with the Sanskrit Hymn of the Incarnation which appeared in the same number of the Twentieth Century⁽⁴⁾ - on the ground that it creates a false picture for Hindus. Yet there is surely nothing wrong with attempting the task of explaining the Christological problem in the terms of Hindu psychology. The fact that the solution is close to that of Apollinaris should not rule out this method of approach, which has as good a claim to validity as one which uses an outdated Greek psychology.

Upadhyaya is here reproducing - with Vedantic terminology - the position of what he understands to be Catholic orthodoxy.⁽⁵⁾ He writes:

"My definition of 'personality' accords with the views of some of the ablest Catholic theologians of the day. According to them the term 'rational being' would be a riddle if it did not imply a reflexive knowledge of the self. The human soul of Christ has no reflexive knowledge apart from the divine Hypostasis. I do not hold that in

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- (1) It is interesting that Animananda says that Christ is himself the "highest God"-parabrahman. Upadhyaya would not have been ready to accept, e.g. R.Panikkar's equation of Christ with Isvara. This is one of the strongest points of his use of Sankara.
- (2) These are
- (1) The sheath of the body (annamaya kosa).
 - (2) The sheath of breath (life) (pranamaya kosa).
 - (3) The sheath of mind (manomaya kosa).
 - (4) The sheath of knowledge (viijnanmaya kosa).
 - (5) The sheath of joy (anandamaya kosa).
- (3) BA 128 cp. AV 162
- (4) 20th Century, 1901, p.14 ff. AV 162.
- (5) "I never write on theological or philosophical matters without the support of good theologians with whom I have personal correspondence." BA 106. His correspondents included, e.g. Fr. Boedder, S.J. of Stonyhurst.

Christ there are two personalities."⁽¹⁾

Here we can see a man who is striving, like Leontius of Byzantium or John of Damascus, to secure an orthodox Chalcedonian position, avoiding both Monophysitism and Apollinarianism, but tending in the direction of the latter.⁽²⁾ It should be noted also that he departs from the position of Keshub Chunder Sen in that he does not relate this conception to that of Kenosis, of "divinity filling the void".⁽³⁾ He would have agreed with Relton's summary of Leontius and John of Damascus:

"The human nature of the God-Man was from the very beginning inseparably united with the Divine Nature, and in virtue of that union received from the Logos-personality its personality and thus its completeness."⁽⁴⁾

(d) Incarnation or Avatara?

Upadhyaya follows Keshub Chunder Sen in refusing to call Christ an avatara.⁽⁵⁾ There is only one Incarnation, that of Christ, for He is unique, and in Him God Himself, parabrahman than whom there can be none higher, becomes Incarnate.

Having thus made the position of Christ as the unique Incarnation of God secure, Upadhyaya goes on, in his later writings, to allow validity to the claims of Krishna, not as an Incarnation of Brahman, for that position belongs to Christ

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- (1) BA 106. Upadhyaya is here defending himself against charges of unorthodoxy.
(2) There is no separate "personality" of the human Christ, i.e. anhypostasia is postulated. Rather the human nature finds its hypostasis in the divine, in a process of enhypostasia. cp. John of Byzantium: "We confess that in two perfect natures there is but one subsistence of the Son of God incarnate; holding that there is one and the same subsistence belonging to His Divinity and His humanity, and granting that the two natures are preserved in him after the union, but we do not hold that each is separate and by itself, but that they are united to each other in one compound subsistence. For we look upon the union as essential, that is, as true and not imaginary." Quoted in H.M.Relton, A Study in Christology, p. 84. Compare the discussion above p. 64f.
(3) He speaks of "condescension", but not of Kenosis. "...The Incarnation is a pure condescension of God by which he became one with men in weakness, so that men may become one with Him in strength. BA. App. I, p. iii, from the Tablet Jan. 1903.
(4) Relton, op. cit. p.90 My italics.
(5) v. supra p. 63.

alone, but as an avatara of Visnu. This is undoubtedly a strange development, one which involved Brahmabandhab at the time in an acute controversy with J.N. Farquhar,⁽¹⁾ and which has been enough to damn him unread in the eyes of many Christians ever since. His Baptist friend, B.N. Nag, in defending him, writes:

"It is said that Sree Krishna was a unique manifestation of rational wisdom and power, but Christ was the Saviour of sinners. Krishna was an Avatar but Christ was the Incarnation of God."⁽²⁾

But why should he wish to vindicate Krishna? The answer to the question is probably twofold. Upadhyaya, as a dedicated nationalist who felt that his country and its whole religio-cultural heritage was being obliterated by the West, felt called to defend many beliefs and practices which in his earlier days he would readily have surrendered. Secondly, his view of the possibility of separating Hindu religion and culture, and ultimately of "secularizing" the religious content of Hinduism⁽³⁾ made him feel that, as long as Christ's uniqueness was secured it did not much matter if respect or veneration were paid to Hindu deities.

His attitude towards the Hindu "personal" deities was either to treat them as great historical figures, or to "moralize" them, or to do both. Thus he defends the historical position of Krishna, and, because of the lofty teaching of the Gita, claims him as a great moral leader. The undoubtedly immoral stories of the Puranas are interpreted allegorically.⁽⁴⁾ He writes:

"Sectarian cults have disfigured Krishna... The Krishna as represented by

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- (1) BA 123. Upadhyaya was replying to Farquhar's critique of Krishna in his book Gita and Gospel (1904). Farquhar questioned Krishna's historicity and held that if he did live (a) he was immoral (cp. the Puranas), and (b) he lived before the battle of Kuruksetra and so could not have been the originator of the teaching of the Gita.
- (2) BA 184.
- (3) v. supra p. 193.
- (4) It is still common to find people treating the stories of the Puranas allegorically. Dr. Radhakrishnan notes the tendency, but himself solves the problem, as does Upadhyaya, by rejecting the Puranic account of Krishna. (Indian Philosophy I p.496 cp. W.G. Archer: The Loves of Krishna - in Indian Painting and Poetry, (London, 1957), pp. 75 ff for a study of the allegorization of Krishna.

Vaishnava sects is to be denounced. But Krishna of History and Philosophy is really an object of unbounded reverence.... Take Krishna's teaching in the Gita....it is the highest rational philosophy made practical.... I must say that I look upon Krishna as a unique manifestation of Divine power and wisdom."(1)

It must be admitted that Upadhyaya's position is dangerous here, and yet there is logic in it. Hindu religion for him is something precious, not to be thrown away lightly, and if it is to be followed by some, then it needs purification. He is a Roman Catholic, and Hinduism represents natural theology - "the highest rational philosophy" - a natural theology with a richer content than that of the West, and one which rises higher, as it takes man to the rational knowledge of God as triune (sat, cit, ananda). Within that natural theology Krishna appears as an incarnation of Visnu, who is himself a "personal" manifestation of the supreme Brahman. Thus Krishna is at several removes from God, and appears only in time and space, not having any existence beyond that. In other words he belongs to the realm of maya, of contingent being. Christ on the other hand is beyond maya, for he is God Himself, living in the eternal dialogue of the Trinity. He too appears in history, as the man Jesus. But his personality is eternally in the Godhead.

Thus Krishna the avatara does not constitute a threat to Christ the Incarnation. In a blunt but vivid phrase Upadhyaya says, "Christ is like the Sun and Krishna a juicy ball!" (2)

Upadhyaya's views on the possibility of "secularizing" Hinduism were greatly influenced by Bankim Chatterji, the author of "Bande Mataram". (3) For Bankim, writes Animananda, religion was not supernatural:

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- (1) BA 130, footnote.
(2) BA 128
(3) v. supra p. 207.

"It is a natural and rational spirituality... Krishna, though worshipped, is a historic personage, a Teacher, not the Puranic and marvellous miracle-worker. He is an Avatar, but not the Avatar of secular Vaishnavism.

If Hinduism claims to be only a natural and rational religion, if it is not a faith based on supernatural revelation, if Krishna is just a teacher of this natural and rational spirituality... and not a religious saviour from sin and supernatural death, then it is possible to be a Hindu and a Christian at the same time. Bankim had rationalized Hinduism and taken away its peculiar religious elements, reducing it to be a spirituality and man-made philosophy. On this as a basis Upadhyaya thought that he could build up his own religious and supernatural Faith. Theism would not conflict with Christian Revelation and Faith. The Teacher Krishna would not compete with the Saviour Jesus Christ."(1)

We shall return to a fuller discussion of this interesting theory of "secularized Hinduism" later.(2) In general it has much to recommend it, but on this particular issue of Krishna there is force in Vith's criticism that, whatever may be the view of Krishna of people like Upadhyaya, for a great many people in India he is simply the god of sexual love, and at least partly for that reason is popular.(3)

There is no doubt that Upadhyaya allows to Hindu theism - both advaita and also personal Theism - a considerable validity in its own field. He is concerned that the reality of the religious experience of millions of Hindus for hundreds of years should ^{not} be denied.(4) But at best it is simply a stage on the journey to something more ultimate, and the final stage is found only in Christ. He writes:

"The Gita (5) teaches that God descends from age to age to punish the wicked, to award the righteous and to establish religion. But Christianity holds that God by putting on human creature hood? has given His Life only once to make Prayaschita (6) for the sins of mankind.

(1) BA 157.

(2) v. infra pp 673 ff.

(3) AV 186. Compare what has already been said about Sarasvati and Kali. v. supra pp. 187, 207.

(4) This is not, after all, so very different from the approach of Farquhar, or Panikkar, though few Christians have allowed themselves to penetrate so far inside Hinduism as Upadhyaya.

(5) Gita IV, 6-8.

(6) prayascitta = expiation. cp. supra p. 187.

Interpreting the term avatar in the light of the teachings of the Gita, Jesus cannot be called an Avatar. The tattva⁽¹⁾ of His appearance is entirely of a different nature."⁽²⁾

Krishna, then, has meaning for Hindus. But the ultimate knowledge of God is to be found only through Christ, the unique, once-for-all Incarnation of God.⁽³⁾

(1) tattva = essence, "thatness".

(2) BA 123.

(3) In his reply to Farquhar, Upadhyaya works out in considerable detail a "Doctrine of Avatara". One feels almost as though he were making out a case for calling Jesus an avatara, but he asserts clearly that Jesus is not to be included in the list of avataras. His points are worth noting, especially in connection with the later work of V. Chakkarai. v. infra pp. 419 ff.

Man is held prisoner by ignorance (avidya) and so is the victim of his karma, and involved in a ceaseless round of activity and suffering (pravritti). How is he to escape? Only by the Grace of a personal God (Isvara).

"There is no other way for one subjected to the bondage of karma save the grace of the Lord of Maya, save the mercy of God... The compassion of Isvara intensifies and takes "form" (rupa), ...that form through the influence of which ... the human intellect is capable of following the path of Nishkam and Nivritti". (i.e. non-attachment)

If Isvaratva (deity) unites with the Jivatva (humanity) it is then and then alone that the creatures can rise superior to avidya...."

"So the Lord of Maya enters the domain of Maya and is born - but not according to karma." (Traditionally Krishna is not subject to karma).

Is the avatara of Krishna docetic? Upadhyaya holds that it is not:

"Some sectarians believe that the humanity of the avatara is not a fact but a show. This is a great mistake.....It is to be understood that what is world-form (Visva-rupa) has actually been a man. He has created Himself a particular human form, composed of mind, intelligence and body (mana, buddhi, deha). The individuality of the Avatar is full of Isvaratva. It is engaged in but not subject to karma. It is full of jnana and prema but above Sadhana and Siddhi.... The Avatara is an actual human personality (manava purushatva) but aprasiddha i.e. devoid of naturality (prakrititattva)."
BA 126-7

It is rather disconcerting to note that Upadhyaya is here using, in connection with Krishna as avatara, many terms and conceptions which are identical with those he has used in describing the doctrine of the two Natures in Christ the Incarnation. (v. supra pp. 212 ff.)

(5) The Doctrine of the Work of Christ

We have seen how, in his Hymn of the Incarnation Upadhyaya describes the work of Christ:

Dispeller of weakness
Of soul and body, pouring out life for others,
.....
Priest and Offerer
Of his own soul in agony, whose Life is Sacrifice,
Destroyer of sin's poison.....

.....
Vanquisher of fierce death. (1)

and in the Hymn to the Trinity He is described as

"Giver of highest Release". (2)

Only Christ can conquer sin:

"Only one man, Jesus Christ, the incarnate righteousness," he writes, "resisted it. He who takes his stand on this rock, leaving his tempest-tossed frail bark of self, will no more be in danger of being swallowed up by the depthless abyss of sin." (3)

Upadhyaya is here speaking from experience, and in a moving passage writes of what the Death of Christ means for a sinner:

"But a heavy invisible burden presses me down. I have most grievously offended a friend, to fathom whose love understanding fails. He is full of glory, full of honour...But he forsook all. He became a man of sorrows, an outcast; his soul was sorrowful even unto death.... And for whom all this suffering and sacrifice? For me, a traitor. The thought of this unspeakable goodness of my friend fills me with shame. He is ready to receive me. But I shrink back in the very agony of shame. The more he shows me favour, the keener becomes the sense of my guilt." (4)

In another passage the emphasis on self-sacrifice and suffering love is repeated:

"Though the Eternal Unity is the source of this temporal multiplicity, yet disharmony, strife and war have made victims of the children of

(1) v. supra p. 210.

(2) sumukandam.

(3) BA 39.

(4) BA 47 from Jote, June, 1897.

the Supreme One, and the primeval unity cannot be restored unless the selfish, aggrandising humanity be encountered by self-sacrificing and innocent suffering and compassionate love."⁽¹⁾

The thought here is chiefly that of the moral influence of the suffering and death of Christ. "The thought of this unspeakable goodness of my friend fills me with shame". Humanity must be "encountered by self-sacrifice and innocent suffering and compassionate love." Yet there are clear overtones of vicarious suffering also. The suffering is "for me". We must remember that the idea of vicarious suffering is foreign to Hinduism which believes in karma, a system where everyone must bear the consequences of their deeds.⁽²⁾ And for this reason Upadhyaya attacks the doctrine of karma, pointing out that it is true that we reap what we sow, but that according to karma what we now reap may not be of our sowing. There must, he believes, be a place for vicarious suffering.⁽³⁾

(6) The Chief End of Man

"God created man to impart to him everlasting felicity. This felicity consists in the beatific contemplation of the essence of God."⁽⁴⁾

Here Upadhyaya discovers a natural affinity between the end of advaita and that of Thomist theology. Perhaps he was unaware of the first question of the Shorter Catechism when he wrote that

"Protestant professors are totally oblivious of the idea that the end of

(1) BA 101. The quotation is from Upadhyaya's review of Tagore's Naivedya.

(2) cp. AV 96. The example of Siva drinking the poison to save the world, which is in any case purely mythological, does not deal with the fact of vicarious suffering for the individual sinner.

(3) BA 69. It should be noted that what Upadhyaya says about karma in connection with the avantara-doctrine (v. supra p. 218) relates entirely to the thought-world of Hinduism, not to Christianity.

(4) BA App. II, iv.

man is to behold God as He is."⁽¹⁾

Man must not be satisfied with abstract knowledge of God's Divinity, nor even with "realization of the Divine Presence".⁽²⁾ Only in the contemplation of God's Essence is final bliss to be found, and that not in this life, not in via, but only in gloria, as the gracious reward of those who have lived faithfully below.

"God, by the power of the sanctifying Grace, exalted the natural man to the supernatural dignity of divine heirship and fitted him to the exercise of virtues which, at the day of reward, would make him worthy to receive the gift of beatific God-vision."⁽³⁾

(7) The Church

In his earlier days as a Christian Upadhyaya seems to have accepted the discipline of the Roman Catholic Church gladly, though in later days he had many conflicts with authority, and on one occasion encouraged his publisher to take a legal case against the Church authorities.⁽⁴⁾ When he first became a Christian and was baptized in the Anglican Church, he made a statement that he did not thereby become a member of the Church of England, and that same night when the census-checker asked him if he was a Roman Catholic or a Protestant he replied: "Neither. Put me down as an Indian Catholic."⁽⁵⁾

Unlike many Indian Christians he did, however, gladly recognize the need for

(1) BA App. I, ii.

(2) BA App. II, iv. He refers to the bhakti type of union with a personal God.

(3) BA App. II, vi.

(4) AV 163-4. This was on the occasion, in 1901, of the edict of the Apostolic Delegation forbidding Roman Catholics to read the 20th Century. The case was not proceeded with.

(5) BA 44.

the visible organized church and for the regular ministry of the Word and Sacraments, although towards the end of his life, when deeply involved in political activities, he was somewhat irregular in his attendance at Church. As late as 6th July, 1904, he writes to his friend Khemchand:

"Be assured that insubordination against the holy Church is for me a matter of impossibility."(1)

He was convinced that fundamentally there was no contradiction between his political activity and his active membership of the Church, and to his friend T.L.Vasvani said, speaking of that political activity:

"Yes, it is a hard sacrifice, but I am offering it so that the Kingdom of Christ may be set up in India."(2)

He died very suddenly in hospital, without receiving the last rites of his Church, and his body was cremated by his Hindu friends.(3) The obituary notices which appeared in his own daily Sandhya, however, spoke of him clearly as a Christian, and his most intimate friends, such as Animananda, had never any doubts as to his desire to remain, not merely a Christian, but a member of his own Church.

We have seen in addition how he sought to understand and appropriate for himself the teaching of that Church, and in none of his writings do we find any criticism of the basic "deposit" of the Christian faith as found in the Bible, or even of the Thomist system, which he appears to have accepted in toto, without

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- (1) AV 190.
(2) AV 191.
(3) AV 194.

question. (1)

It was otherwise, however, with what he regarded as the Western trappings of Christianity in India, and to these he devotes many scathing attacks.

"It is the foreign clothes of the Catholic Faith that have chiefly prevented our countrymen from perceiving its universal nature. Catholicism has donned the European garb in India. Our Hindu brethren cannot see the subtlety (sic) and sanctity of our Divine religion because of its hard coating of Europeanism... They cannot understand how poverty can be compatible with boots, trousers and hats, with spoon and fork, meat and wine... St. Francis Xavier, de Nobili, Beschi and Britto were poor, and they were looked upon by the people really as poor, because they were all things to all men, Hindu to the Hindus....

The European clothes of the Catholic religion should be removed as early as possible. It must put on the Hindu garment to be acceptable to the Hindus. This transformation can be effected only by the hands of Indian missionaries preaching the Holy Faith in the Vedantic language, holding devotional meetings in the Hindu way and practising the virtue of poverty conformably to Hindu asceticism. When the Catholic Church in India will be dressed up⁽²⁾ in Hindu garments then will our countrymen perceive that she elevates man to the Universal Kingdom of Truth by stooping down to adapt herself to his racial peculiarities."⁽³⁾

He thus comes to the conclusion that there is no reason why a man should not be a Hindu and a Christian at the same time. More and more he interpreted Hinduism in a "secularized" way, as representing national culture rather than a particular religion. In July, 1898 he published in Sophia an article entitled "Are we Hindus?" in which he writes:

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- (1) He writes: [The Roman Catholic Church]... "is cosmopolitan. She adapts herself to the changing environments of time and space, preserving at the same time her doctrines in their entirety. She is one in essence but various in manifestation; she is one body, but in many clothes. In Asia she puts on the oriental costume, in Europe the Latin garb." BA 73.
He gives a fanciful Sanskrit etymology of the word "Catholic":
Kala = time; sthala = place. Catholic = ka-sthalik "pertaining to all times and lands" (!) BA 73.
- (2) The meaning is clearly "dressed", not "dressed up" in the sense of a charade!
- (3) BA 74 ff.

"By birth we are Hindus and shall remain Hindus till death. But as dvija (twice-born)⁽¹⁾ by virtue of our sacramental rebirth, we are Catholic, we are members of an indefectible communion embracing all ages and climes....

In customs and manners.... we are genuine Hindus... Our faith fills the whole world and is not confined to any country or race; our faith is universal and consequently includes all truths.

Our thought and thinking is emphatically Hindu. We are more speculative than practical, more given to synthesis than analysis, more contemplative than active. It is extremely difficult for us to learn how to think like the Greeks of old or the scholastics of the Middle Ages. Our brains are moulded in the philosophic cast of our ancient country."⁽²⁾

Thus he was led to the idea of founding his order of "Hindu-Catholic" sannyasis. In this he had the example of De Nobili before him, and he himself set an example which was to be followed by Sundar Singh and many others.⁽³⁾ Despite the lack of ecclesiastical support which forced him to abandon the monastery at Jabalpur, he retained the saffron robe which he discarded only when he had to appear in court on a charge of political treason, and did not wish to defile the "garb of liberty".

"We can have no rest," he wrote, "until we see the religion of Christ lived by Hindu ascetics and preached by Hindu monks; until we behold the beauty of the Catholic Faith set off with oriental vestments."⁽⁴⁾

Upadhyaya was ahead of his time in these ideas, and it is perhaps only today that they are beginning to find support and be put into practice.⁽⁵⁾ Both in the practical matter of dress and way of life, and more especially in his

(1) In Hinduism dvija is used of members of the 3 highest castes - brahman, ksatriya, vaisya. A boy becomes dvija (twice-born) when he undergoes the sacramental rites connected with donning the sacred cord. Upadhyaya here adapts the word in an interesting way as indicating the Christian "new birth" symbolized by baptism.

(2) BA 71.

(3) v. infra p. 240 for other early experiments.

(4) BA 78

(5) e.g. by the late Fr. J. Monchanin and his colleague and successor Swami Abhishiktananda at the Saccidananda Ashram. v. infra p. 557.

massive effort to use Hindu ways of thought for the expression of the Christian faith, Upadhyaya was an outstanding pioneer. Animananda has called him "the greatest Indian that ever found his way to Christ".⁽¹⁾ Having found his way to Christ he was desperately anxious to show that Christ was the Highest: that no follower of the jnana marga could ever say to him "Christianity is all right for you, but my faith in Brahman is higher, for it transcends the personal". And so Christ, as cit, is seen in Brahman, and the ultimate object of human thought, as of human devotion, is the Trinity, sat, cit, ananda. To have stated this so clearly and to have combined it with such a blazing devotion to Christ the God-Man, the Narahari, is a great achievement in the confrontation between Christianity and Hinduism. An anonymous commentator writes:

He attempted "The synthesis of philosophy and theology, Eastern and Western, not by evaporating concepts but by crystallising the message of the Catholic Church in the Vedanta solution of Sankaracarya." ⁽²⁾

He did not "evaporate concepts", but sought to show that, if sat, cit, ananda is the highest level to which reason or revelation can lead us, then it is there alone, and not at any lower stage, that God is to be seen in Christ.

(1) BA 196.

(2) Dust-jacket of The Blade. op. P. Chenchiah: "The negative plate of Jesus developed in a solution of Hinduism brings out hitherto unknown features of the portrait." v. infra p. 393.

CHAPTER IX

CHANGES IN THE THEOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT, 1900 - 1925.

Before we go on to study the work of Sadhu Sundar Singh, and of the well-known group of South Indian theologians, Appasamy, Chenchiah and Chakkarai, who were active in the 'twenties, it is well that we should pause briefly to consider certain changes which had taken place in the theological climate in the period just before their work began to attract attention, for in many ways the twenty-five years from about 1900 to 1925 marked a distinct change in the theological atmosphere in India, a change which made itself felt principally in three ways:

(1) The growth of political nationalism leading to a desire for "Indianization" within the Church as well as in the national field;

(2) The movement of missionary thought symbolized by the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, which marked the beginning of a trend away from "missions" to the development of "younger Churches"; and

(3) The change in the dominant missionary theology from the conservative evangelical position which had largely held the field since Carey's day to a more or less "liberal" outlook, typified above all in J.N. Farquhar and his well known description of Christianity as the "Crown" or "fulfilment" of Hinduism. We shall look briefly at each of these factors in the developing situation, remembering that in this inquiry we are concerned with "missionary" theology and strategy only in so far as it produced a response or reaction on the part of Indian Christian thinkers and writers. (1)

1. The Effect of Growing Nationalism

In our studies of Vivekananda and Brahmabandhab we have already seen something of the growth of political nationalism in India in the closing decades of the 19th century. The foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885,

(1) For a detailed study of the missionary thought of the time, see Eric J. Sharpe: Not to Destroy but to Fulfil: The Contribution of J.N. Farquhar to Protestant Missionary Thought in India before 1914, (Uppsala, 1965); and Eric J. Sharpe: J.N. Farquhar: A Memoir (YMCA, Calcutta, 1963)

and the visit of Vivekananda to the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893 are two milestones in the growth of national self-consciousness. The more liberal and constitutional reformers of the Brahma Samaj tradition like Justice Ranade of Bombay suddenly found themselves by-passed in popular estimation by the militant attitude of Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak who in 1893 seized on the annual Ganapati Festival in Maharashtra and made it a vehicle of outspoken nationalism.⁽¹⁾ In Bengal, besides the literary and cultural nationalism of Rabindranath Tagore there was the more violent movement centring round people like Bankim Chatterji and Brahmabandhab himself, and later Aurobindo Ghose.⁽²⁾ For many of these leaders nationalism was closely linked with a reassertion of Hinduism, in conscious opposition to Christianity, as for example in the revival of the cult of Krishna, which we have discussed in connection with Brahmabandhab.⁽³⁾

Two events of the year 1905 - the Japanese victory over the Russians, and Lord Curzon's partition of Bengal - did much to strengthen India's self-consciousness as an Asian nation, and to provoke anti-British feeling. The stage was now set for a continuous national struggle, which was to end only with Indian independence in 1947. The greatest figure of all stepped on to that stage when, in 1915, after a long struggle for the rights of Indians in South Africa, Mahatma Gandhi returned to India, and gradually established himself at the head of the nationalist movement.

For some years the attitude of Indian Christians to the nationalist movement was a difficult and precarious one. The missionaries, who at least up to 1920 constituted the real leadership of the Christian Churches, were mainly anti-nationalist and at first comparatively few Indian Christians found it possible to throw in their lot whole-heartedly with the nationalist cause. There were, of course, notable exceptions, like the Rev. Kali Charan Banerji of Bengal, whose activities in

(1) *op. W. Stewart: India's Religious Frontier*, (London, 1964), p.58.

(2) Afterwards Sri Aurobindo retired from active political life to his ashram at Pondicherry.

(3) *v. supra* pp. 188 ff. *op. Sharpe, NTD* p.194 f.

politics and in the Christo Samaj are noted elsewhere,⁽¹⁾ and his famous nephew Brahmabandhab. Gradually, however, a number of Christians, both Indian and missionary - among the latter notably C.F. Andrews - threw in their lot with Gandhi, and became openly critical not only of the British raj but of the "Western captivity" of the Indian Church.⁽²⁾ Gandhiji himself was greatly influenced by Christianity, especially by the ethics of Jesus, but strongly objected to "proselytism" and to what he regarded as the denationalization of Indian Christians.⁽³⁾

By the beginning of the 'twenties, then, the national movement was highly organized and influential, and although the majority of Christians were prepared to continue in a predominantly Western tradition of Church organization, worship and theology, there were already clear voices being heard summoning the Indian Church to be truly Indian, and to accept the Indian national and cultural tradition, while still remaining faithful to Christ.

2. Ecumenical Influences

In the early days of missionary work in India the contact between the different missions was often slight, and not infrequently there was competition. As time went on, co-operation increased, and from 1872 onwards Decennial Conferences of Missions were held, to discuss problems of common interest and to publish reports.⁽⁴⁾ From 1876 onwards the Christian Handbook of India was published, at intervals, as a co-operative enterprise.

(1) v. supra p. 182.

(2) Among Gandhi's Indian Christian associates were Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, later Minister of Health in the Indian Government, and J.C. Kumarappa, author of Practice and Precepts of Jesus (Navajivan, Ahmedabad, 1945), and Christianity, its Economy and Way of Life, (Ahmedabad, 1945).

(3) For a comprehensive study of Gandhi's relation to Christianity, see Otto Wolff: Mahatma und Christus (Berlin, 1955).

(4) These Conferences were held at Allahabad 1872, Calcutta 1882, Bombay 1892, Madras 1902.
 cp. K. Baago: A History of the National Christian Council of India, 1914-1964, Nagpur, 1965.

There were other, more far-reaching signs of a new spirit of unity. In 1908 the South India United Church, a union of Presbyterians and Congregationalists, came into being, and 1910 saw the foundation of the United Theological College in Bangalore, and the reorganization of Serampore College. Meanwhile, a strong feeling had arisen among Indian Christians that the work of evangelism should not be left only to foreign organizations, with the result that in 1903 the Indian Missionary Society of Tinnevely was founded, under the leadership of V.S. Azariah and A.S. Appasamy, while in 1905 came the foundation of the National Missionary Society of India, both of them being staffed and supported entirely from within India.⁽¹⁾

In 1910 came the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, which, with its albeit inadequate delegations from the "younger churches", caught the imagination of the Churches, in both East and West, in a new way. V.S. Azariah was one of the Indian delegates, and made a deep impression, helping materially to change the relationship between the Churches of the West and the growing Church in India. Macnicol suggests that if we are to point to a single moment as symbolizing the change in attitude and relationship, it is to be found in the closing sentences of Azariah's speech to the Conference:

"You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for Love. Give us FRIENDS."⁽²⁾

From this time onwards may be dated the gradual decline of Indian missions, and the rise of the Indian Church, slowly but steadily assuming responsibility for its own support and leadership, and, even more important, for its own thought.

An important result of the Edinburgh Conference was the setting up in India in 1914 of the National Missionary Council, which in 1923 became the National Christian Council.⁽³⁾ As Baago points out it was many years before the Council

(1) D.F. Ebright: The National Missionary Society of India, 1905-1942, (Chicago, 1944)

(2) Macnicol: India in the Dark Wood, p.119.

(3) Baago, op. cit. p. 17 ff.

became a truly Indian body: it was not, indeed, until the early 1940s that the administrative leadership was taken over by Indians, and the Council came out unequivocally in support of the Congress and its demand for Indian Independence.⁽¹⁾ However, the gradual development of the Council provided from the first a forum for the exchange of ideas, and its work has been of great significance for the Indian Church. There is no doubt, however, that some of the rising theologians, like Chenchiah and Chakkarai, felt themselves largely out of sympathy with the Council, as with the Movement towards Church Unity: for them the prime need of the moment was "Indianization", and this the Council for many years failed to encourage.

Another indirect outcome of the Edinburgh Conference was the movement towards Church Union in South India, which first took organized form in 1919, when, after a conference at Tranquebar, an appeal was issued by 33 Christian leaders (31 of them Indians), as a result of which the SIUC, and later the Anglicans and Methodists, decided to negotiate for union.⁽²⁾

Thus, by 1920 it had become possible to speak of "The Indian Church", as distinct from Christian missions in India, though indeed the leadership in the many churches of Western origin was still very largely in Western hands. Yet here and there distinguished Indian leaders were already exercising great influence,⁽³⁾ and the process of growth towards full Indian control had begun.

3. The Theological Climate

During the greater part of the 19th century, as we have seen, the theology of most missionaries in India was what might be termed conservative evangelical, while their usual attitude to Hinduism was one of refutation. To say this is by no means to imply that no missionaries were sympathetic towards Hinduism; as long ago as the 18th century, Ziegenbalg had made a penetrating study of Tamil religious

(1) *ibid.* p. 61.

(2) The matter is taken up later. *v. infra* pp. 526 ff.

(3) One might mention V.S. Azariah, S.K. Rudra, K.T. Paul, S.K. Datta.

customs and written a Genealogy of Malabar Gods, which provoked the Home Secretary, A.H.Francke of Halle, to say,

"The missionaries were sent out to exterminate Heathenism in India, not to spread heathen nonsense all over Europe."⁽¹⁾

In general, however, the attitude was that the theology of the sending Churches in the West ought to be reproduced in India, and that those who were won over from Hinduism should sever all religious connection with their former religion.⁽²⁾ As the 19th century advanced, various features led to a change in this attitude. Indian missionaries were not ^{un}aware of higher criticism, and of the new trends in theology which accompanied it. In addition, through the work of Oriental scholars like Max Müller, there grew up an interest in comparative religion, which frequently carried with it a mood of sympathy towards Hinduism, as we have seen in Max Müller's encounter with Nehemiah Goreh.⁽³⁾ Among well-known missionaries who reflected the new attitude of sympathy and openness towards Hinduism were William Miller (1838-1923), the Scottish Principal of the Madras Christian College⁽⁴⁾ and T.E.Slater (1840-1912) of the London Missionary Society, who worked as an evangelist among educated Hindus in Madras and published an influential book, The Higher Hinduism in Relation to Christianity in 1901.⁽⁵⁾ If we wish, however, to select one figure who more than any other typifies the new approach, we shall undoubtedly turn to J.N.Farquhar (1861-1929).

As Sharpe points out in his detailed study, Farquhar's background was conservative evangelical,⁽⁶⁾ and he was a layman, who had never undergone theological training. After a period of teaching in a Christian College in Calcutta ~~he became~~

(1) Lehmann, op. cit. p.32. v.supra p. 28.

(2) The charge, however, that Indian Christians were encouraged to adopt Western clothes and modes of living, has little truth in it.

(3) v. supra p. 90.

(4) Sharpe NTD pp. 82 ff. For Miller's influence on Chenchiah and Chakkarai v. infra pp. 356, 394.

(5) NTD pp.94 ff.

(6) He was brought up in the Evangelical Union, a small Church in Aberdeen having affiliations with Congregationalism. NTD. p.109.

he became a secretary in the College department of the Calcutta Y.M.C.A., and finally in 1911, was released from student work to become full-time Literary Secretary to the Indian National Council of the YMCA, a post which he retained until his retirement from India in 1923.

Farquhar felt the crucial need of a workable "apologetic" approach to the university-educated Indian, and as a means to that end sought to find a more satisfactory relationship between Christianity and Hinduism than that of mere mutual exclusion. In a series of writings he gradually worked out his idea of "fulfilment", which reached classical expression in The Crown of Hinduism, published in 1913. Farquhar expresses his view in an article in the Student Movement (June 1910), relating it to Matt. 5, 17 "I am not come to destroy but to fulfil" (A.V.) He writes:

"Christ's own declaration, 'I came not to destroy but to fulfil', has cleared up for us completely all our difficulties with regard to the Old Testament...Can it be that Christ himself was thinking of pagan faiths as well as Judaism?.... If Christ is able to satisfy all the religious needs of the human heart, then all the elements of pagan religions, since they spring from these needs, will be found reproduced in perfect form, completely fulfilled, consummated in Christ."⁽¹⁾

Farquhar, in The Crown of Hinduism, worked out his theory by a detailed description of the various aspects of Hinduism, such as karma, the Vedanta, the great sects, the doctrine of incarnation, etc. It was his belief that there is a definite evolutionary connection between Hinduism and Christianity, as of lower to higher, and that so what is only foreshadowed in Hinduism is fulfilled and perfected in Christianity. Farquhar was of course attacked by most conservative missionaries, and no doubt was also misunderstood for, as Sharpe points out, his theory rested on two definite assumptions, (a) that the passage from "lower" to "higher" is not automatic, but depends on individual choice, and (b) that ultimately Christianity must replace Hinduism, rather than simply reforming it.⁽²⁾ In many ways, indeed, his approach foreshadows that recently made by Raymond Panikkar in The Unknown Christ of Hinduism,⁽³⁾ with its idea of Christianity as

(1) NTD p.311 f.

(2) *ibid.* p.335 f.

(3) *v. infra* p.566.

Hinduism which has died and risen again transformed. In 1909 Farquhar had written:

"Hinduism must die into Christianity, in order that the best her philosophers, saints and ascetics have longed for and prayed for may live."⁽¹⁾

Despite the opposition Farquhar's book at first aroused, his attitude gradually came to dominate the field, and indeed became, perhaps, the typical missionary approach to Hinduism in the 'twenties and 'thirties, right up till 1938 when Kraemer's The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World fell, like Barth's Römerbrief, "on the playground of the theologians" (Karl Heim). ^{Hdwm}

We have given this account of Farquhar because his views were undoubtedly influential on the coming generation of Indian Christian theologians like Appasamy and Chenchiah. At the same time it is worth noting that his books were probably read more by missionaries and missiologists than by Indians, whether Christian or Hindu. It is strange to recall that Brahmabandhab clashed with him in early days because he thought Farquhar was insufficiently sympathetic to the Krishna-cult,⁽²⁾ while Appasamy criticizes him for his rather sceptical view of the possibility of Indian Christian Theology, and for his lack of success in getting Indian authors to write books in the numerous series which he edited.⁽³⁾ Nevertheless, when we consider Sharpe's account of Farquhar's theology - never Farquhar's strong point - we realize how many of the attitudes he adopted became common currency among Indian theologians in the 'twenties and 'thirties; the Christianity which is to be the Crown of Hinduism turns out to be no particular theology, but rather a return to Harnack's "religion of Jesus". Sharpe writes:

(1) Art. Brahma Samaj in ERE (II) p. 824. cited NTD p. 360.

(2) v. supra p. 215.

(3) Sharpe, J.N. Farquhar Introd. pp. ix, x. The various series of books edited by Farquhar are, however, a most valuable collection, many of which are still in constant use. For a full list see Sharpe, NTD, p. 380. The three series are:

1. The Religious Quest of India series

2. The Heritage of India series (edited jointly with V.S. Azariah)

3. The Religious Life of India series.

Between them these provided a very comprehensive and sympathetic picture of Indian religious, philosophical, social and cultural life.

"Farquhar firmly believed that what was needed was a return to the 'simple' teaching of Jesus as the normative base of Christianity." (1)

In Farquhar's words:

"in setting forth Christianity as the Crown of Hinduism, we shall restrict ourselves to Christ Himself, drawing our evidence only from His own life and teaching..." (2)

Here we see a point of view which is reflected in the work of both Chenchiah and Chakkarai. And it is associated with a "moral influence" theory of the atonement, the crucifixion being

"only the final exhibition before all the world of what had been going on in the life of Jesus from the beginning." (3)

In a telling sentence Sharpe sums up some of the things which are lacking in Farquhar's presentation of Christianity in The Crown of Hinduism:

"There is no treatment of the question of sin and its effects on man's relationship with his Creator; no real treatment of the themes of atonement, forgiveness, reconciliation and salvation; the work of Christ is subordinated to the life and teaching of Christ; there is no eschatology; no mention of the Church as 'the communion of saints'." (4)

It is an overwhelming indictment, and makes us realize that some at least of those points which may strike us as weakest in the group of theologians we are about to study stem far less from the Indian modes of thought which they use than from the Western theological climate of the India of their day which Farquhar did so much to create.

4. "The Light of the East"

This seems the best place to refer, all too briefly, to an interesting and significant revival within the Roman Catholic Church of the tradition inaugurated

(1) NTD p.340 f.

(2) *ibid* p.341.

(3) Crown p.433, cited in NTD p. 342.

(4) *ibid* p.345, Sharpe points out the connections with Harnack, and with the 'New theology' of R.J.Campbell.

by Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya. We have seen how, in his own lifetime, he was disowned and discouraged by his Church authorities, though we may accept the tradition that he died a Roman Catholic. That was in 1907. By 1920 a number of Roman Catholic thinkers, mainly Belgian Jesuits, were beginning to see his work in a truer perspective, and to realize its great and permanent significance. This group of thinkers, whose leaders were Frs. G. Dandoy S.J. and Pierre Johannis, S.J., both Oxford-trained orientalist⁽¹⁾ in 1922 founded a monthly magazine as the vehicle of their views - The Light of the East⁽²⁾ - which may be said to have continued, for a period of many years, the work begun by Brahmabandhab of seeking to discover a positive relationship between Christianity and Hindu philosophy. Over the years a long series of articles by P. Johannis appeared, entitled, To Christ through the Vedanta, in which the author, by means of a detailed analysis of the systems of Sankara, Ramanuja, Vallabha and Chaitanya, sought to show how materials for each of them could be used in the task of "reconstructing" Catholic philosophy.⁽³⁾

Fr. Johannis states his theory explicitly in the first issue of The Light of the East:

"If the Vedanta philosophers will only bring their several positive statements into harmony, they will turn disconnected doctrines into a system and that system will be Thomism or something akin to Thomism."⁽⁴⁾

Again he describes the aim of his series as being:

"To show that we can reconstruct our Catholic Philosophy with materials borrowed from the various Vedantic systems."⁽⁵⁾

(1) Vāth, op. cit. p.225.

(2) Edited from St. Xavier's College, Calcutta.

(3) The articles were later published, in synopsis form, as four pamphlets, entitled To Christ through the Vedanta (3rd edn. 1944), Catholic Press, Ranchi). The first two parts (on Sankara and Ramanuja) have been published as a book in French: Vers le Christ par le Vedanta (Louvain, 1932).

(4) Light, Oct. 1922.

(5) Synopsis Pt. I, Introduction.

A proper critical study of Fr. Johans' massive and valuable work would require a separate volume, and we have accepted the principle of restricting ourselves mainly to Indian rather than missionary theologians. We shall here simply note that he expresses a deep debt to Brahmabandhab,⁽¹⁾ that his doctrine of creation as contingent being is similar to Brahmabandhab's, but that he insists strongly on the need for a doctrine of creatio ex nihilo, and believes that Sankara's system must be complemented by Ramanuja's. On the latter point we give an interesting quotation, reminiscent of Chakkarai's use of Shelly; Johans is seeking to show how, in a Christian reconstruction, the view of Ramanuja that God is endowed with an infinite number of infinite attributes must be completed by the doctrine of Sankara that God is really without inherent qualities, and vice versa. He writes:

"When a ray of light meets a prism, its unity is broken up and the ray displays itself in all its various tints. Had we now to give a definition of the white light, we might, considering all the colours it displays, declare it to be the substratum in which all these colours inhere..... Or we might, considering the ray in itself....define it as pure white luminosity... And yet, if we wish to know what a white ray is, we must know both: that it is explicitly white luminosity, and implicitly all the colours of the rainbow, but these colours not as distinct and separate but in perfect identity.

Thus, really to know God, we have to learn with Ramanuja all his infinite qualities but also to remember with Sankara that all these infinite qualities are not inherent in God, but identically the Pure infinite Light of Spirituality." (2)

Some of the Light of the East editorials are very critical of Protestantism, on the grounds that the Protestant doctrine of the Fall and the corruption of reason imply that there can be nothing but evil in Indian, as in all human philosophy and culture.⁽³⁾ Protestant critics might retort that a "reconstruction"

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- (1) In a very critical review of Veth, G. Dandoy writes: "There is probably not one of the modern attempts to adapt Catholicism to Hindu thought and needs that was not in some way or other inspired or encouraged by the example of Upadhyaya." Light: Sept. 1928. p.5.
 (2) Light, Dec. 1924. p.4.
 (3) e.g. Light Nov. 1923.

which finally arrives only as a "translated" Thomism is a wasted effort, which does justice neither to the true centre of the Gospel nor to Indian philosophy. The change in the ecumenical climate since the 'twenties, however, has rendered some of these old battles profitless, and the magnitude of Johannis' work can now be recognized and appreciated. His^{re}/construction is not the one that we should choose to make, but his marshalling of the evidence has put all later workers in this field in his debt. What is needed now is a "reconstruction" which begins, not from Thomism, or Calvin or Barth, but from the evidence of the New Testament and of Church History, and seeks from these, in an Indian milieu and with Indian thought-forms, to expound the Church's faith anew.

CHAPTER X

THE WATER OF LIFE IN AN INDIAN CUP : SADHU SUNDAR SINGH (1889-1929)

We come now to one who in many respects stood outside the theological and political developments of which we have been thinking, though he was contemporary with them; one who is perhaps the most famous Indian Christian who has yet lived, and whose influence has been widespread and prolonged - Sadhu Sundar Singh.⁽¹⁾

Sundar Singh could not be called a technical theologian. And yet his writings and recorded sayings are full of theology, full of Indian theology, and he must be regarded as one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest of those whose work we are studying. Though he had little formal Christian theological training he was steeped in the teaching of the New Testament, and had an instinctive - or should one say an inspired - knowledge of the content of theological thinking. His influence upon the whole life of Indian Christendom, as well as on leading theologians like A. J. Appasamy, has been so great that we must seek in some detail to find out what he taught. For example, we find Appasamy writing in Christianity as Bhakti Marga (published in 1928, while Sundar Singh was still alive):

"Sadhu Sundar Singh shows in a remarkable way the attraction which Indian Christians feel for mysticism. In his heredity and training are deeply ingrained many of the finer elements of Indian mysticism, and he lives on John's Gospel assimilating its teaching into his very life. He is not a student of Biblical criticism or exegesis. But he has what is more important, a real insight into the mind of Christ. Loving Christ with fervour, seeking to abide in Him and to bear fruit, he has undoubtedly gained a real understanding of the Gospel.... Weight ought to be attached to the intuitive insight of a religious genius like Sundar Singh into the real nature and importance of the Johannine Mysticism."⁽²⁾

(1) For general studies see:

- B.H.Streeter and A.J.Appasamy: The Sadhu (London, 1921). (SAS)
- F.Heiler: The Gospel of Sadhu Sundar Singh (London, 1927). (GSS)
- A.J.Appasamy: Sundar Singh; a Biography (London, 1958)
- T.E.Riddle: The Vision and the Call: a Life of Sadhu Sundar Singh (1st. Indian edn., Kharar, 1964).
- C.F.Andrews: Sadhu Sundar Singh: A Personal Memoir (London, 1934).

(2) Appasamy: Christianity as Bhakti Marga, p.3.

Sundar Singh was born at Rampur in the State of Patiala, in the Punjab, on 3rd September, 1889. Though the family were Sikhs, his mother, a woman of outstanding devotion and love, trained her son in the bhakti-tradition of Hinduism as well as of the Sikh religion, and as a small boy he learnt the Bhagavadgita by heart. His mother's love and example, and his early training in devotion, were to have a great effect on his life's work, and though she never became a Christian he always acknowledged his debt to her, and had no doubt that her anima naturaliter Christiana had found its place in heaven. She died when he was fourteen, but not before placing in his mind the thought that one day he should be a sadhu. Many years later he wrote:

"It was the Holy Ghost who made me a Christian, but it was my mother who made me a Sadhu."(1)

As a boy at a mission school,⁽²⁾ Sundar Singh came in contact with Christianity, but fiercely rejected it. On 16th December 1904 he burnt a copy of the Bible, and even his strict Sikh father rebuked him for such an act. But his heart found no peace. Despite his study of the Gita, the Upanisads and even the Koran, and his practice of the technique of yoga, his heart had remained restless, and now, at the age of fifteen, he resolved one night that if he did not attain peace he would commit suicide in the morning by lying down on the railway line. Early in the morning, however, he saw a great light:

"Then as I prayed and looked into the light, I saw the form of the Lord Jesus Christ. It had such an appearance of glory and love. If it had been some Hindu incarnation I would have prostrated myself before it. But it was the Lord Jesus Christ whom I had been insulting a few days before. I felt that a vision like this could not come out of my own imagination. I heard a voice saying in Hindustani, 'How long will you persecute me? I have come to save you; you were praying to know the right way. Why do you not take it?'

(1) SAS 243.

(2) The American Presbyterian Mission School at Rampur. Riddle, p.9.

The thought then came to me, 'Jesus Christ is not dead but living and it must be He Himself.' So I fell at His feet and got this wonderful Peace which I could not get anywhere else. This is the joy I was wishing to get. This was heaven itself. When I got up, the vision had all disappeared; but although the vision disappeared the Peace and Joy have remained with me ever since."⁽¹⁾

That was on 18th December, 1904, and after further instruction he was baptised into the Anglican Church on 3rd September, 1905, in Simla. His mother had longed that he would become a Sadhu, and now, thirty-three days after his baptism, at the age of sixteen, he became one. But it was as a Christian, not as a Sikh, that he donned the ochre robe.⁽²⁾

In the course of his early wanderings in 1906 he met an American, S.E. Stokes, who was seeking to live in India the life of a St. Francis.⁽³⁾ They joined forces for a time, and from Stokes Sundar Singh learnt much of St. Francis and his life.

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- (1) SAS 6ff. It is an interesting fact that many well-known Indian Christians have had a similar experience of Christ. Compare, e.g. Bakht Singh, The Skill of His Loving Hands (Gospel Lit. Service, Bombay, 1961), pp.14 and 17; Mark Sunder Rao, Ananyatra (CISRS, Bangalore, 1964) p.5. Sunder Singh held that this vision was no dream, but reality. "I have had visions and I know how to distinguish them. But Jesus I have only seen once", C.F. Andrews, op.cit. p.72.
- (2) Sundar Singh was not the first Christian Sadhu. De Nobili's work in the seventeenth century has been seen, and Brahmabandhab's at the end of the nineteenth. As early as 1885 J.G. Shome ("Babu Shome", a friend of Kali Charan Banerji, uncle of Brahmabandhab) had written in the Indian Evangelical Review advocating "fakir" methods (see the reply by W.H. Jackson Picken in Harvest Field Ap. 1885), and the Salvation Army missionaries at first used similar methods, including head-shaving and forehead-marks. (HF, 1886-7, p.341).
- (3) Samuel E. Stokes came from Philadelphia, and was originally an Anglican. Though well-to-do he gave away his goods to the poor, and for some years lived the life of a Sadhu, forming "The Brotherhood of the Imitation", in an attempt to draw together the Indian and Christian traditions. A friend of Gandhi and C.F. Andrews, he was deeply involved in the independence movement, and was imprisoned in 1921-22. Like Verrier Elwin, he ceased to be a Christian, joined the Arya Samaj by Suddhi, and sought to give expression to his faith in a new interpretation of Hinduism based on Love. Sundar Singh later recognised Stoke's instability.

See: S.E. Stokes, Satyakama, or 'True Desires' (being thoughts on The Meaning of Life), S. Ganesan, Triplicane, 1931. (Copy in Woodbrooke Library, Selly Oak).

Riddle: op. cit. pp.26-28.

In 1909, on the advice of his missionary friends, he entered St. John's Divinity College in Lahore. He studied the Bible, the Anglican Prayer Book, elementary Church History, Apologetics and Comparative Religion, but the academic life did not suit him, and he developed a distaste for academic "theology". After two years' study he left, with a preacher's licence for the Lahore Diocese, which he later surrendered to Bishop Lefroy, as he felt called to exercise his preaching ministry in every Church that would have him, not merely in the Anglican. (1)

Now began a wandering, preaching ministry which took him all over India, and from 1912 into Tibet. His spiritual life was nourished by the New Testament, the only book which he constantly carried with him, and he had the frequent mystical experience of communion with Christ. Early in 1913 he felt guided to attempt a fast of forty days, in imitation of his Master. He was unable to continue for the full period, and was rescued in a state of collapse by some woodcutters, but before losing consciousness he had experienced a second vision, not, this time, with his physical eyes, but rather an ecstatic, spiritual vision of the glorified Christ, "with pierced hands, bleeding feet and radiant face". (2) The fast and the second vision left a permanent mark on his spiritual life, bringing a deep experience of peace, and of the spirit's independence of body and brain. From this time it became increasingly easy for him to pass into the state of ecstasy, a state in which he received illumination and refreshment spiritual and physical, and felt that he was caught up into St. Paul's "third heaven" (2 Cor. 12:2) (3)

(1) SAS 19,20.

(2) *ibid.* p. 24 f.

(3) *ibid.* p.109.

He speaks of many mysterious happenings, such as his deliverance without human agency from a well full of dead bodies into which he was thrown at Rasar in Tibet (1), his meetings with an aged Christian rishi of the Himalayas, who was reputed to be three hundred years old (2), and the existence of a Christian brotherhood of Sadhus, said to number 24,000 members, commonly spoken of as the "Secret Sannyasi Mission". (3) The reports of some of these stories led certain people - especially some Roman Catholics, like H. Hosten, who perhaps resented the idea of a saint and sadhu not belonging to their fold, but also some liberal Protestants, like Oskar Pfister, who were sceptical about some of the "miracles" associated with the Sadhu - to regard Sundar Singh as an impostor, but it is difficult to study closely his writings and his life without coming to the conclusion that he was genuine with the true simplicity of the children of God. (4)

He visited Britain, America and Australia in 1920, and several European countries in 1922, and everywhere created a deep impression. (5)

(1) *ibid.* p.30 f.

(2) *ibid.* p.33.

(3) *ibid.* p.32.

(4) For a full discussion of the controversy about Sundar Singh see Appasamy's Biography; also the Bibliography in Heiler GSS 267 ff. Among books attacking Sundar Singh may be mentioned O. Pfister; Die Legende Sundar Singhs (Bern, 1926), while in his defence Heiler wrote Apostel oder Betruger (Munchen, 1925) and Die Wahrheit Sundar Singhs (München, 1927).

(5) One of his close companions in America in 1920 was Frank Buchman! (Andrews, *op. cit.* p. 135) His 1922 tour included a visit to Palestine which moved him deeply.

There were still memories of others who had come from India, Keshub Chunder Sen and Swami Vivekananda, for example, who had proclaimed what India, through the Vedanta, had to offer the West. Here was

"an Indian who proclaimed with all possible earnestness and exclusiveness that Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life, that 'in Him dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily', that the New Testament is the Word of God, and that prayer is the way to enter heaven. That an Indian, a religious man from the land of the Vedas, had nothing to proclaim to the West save the simple message of the revelation of God in Christ - this was an unheard of thing." (1)

He had now become a world-famous figure, and thousands came to hear him speak in every country that he visited. His speaking was effective, and we read of many conversions, both of non-Christians and of nominal Christians (2), while many had their faith deepened through hearing him or reading his books (3). His impressive appearance, his romantic story, and the simplicity and vividness with which he spoke attracted ordinary people, while scholars and theologians flocked to hear an Indian interpretation of the Gospel from one whose spiritual and even psychic experiences seemed unusual and interesting. No Indian Christian had ever created a comparable impression - one might almost say sensation - in the West.

In indifferent health, Sundar Singh resumed his travels in India and Tibet, meeting sometimes with great acceptance, sometimes with opposition from Christian and non-Christian alike. To this time belongs his literary activity, his first book, At the Master's Feet being published in 1922. Sundar's mother-tongue was Urdu, but since 1918 he had been addressing meetings in English, (4) and after his return to India in 1922 editors constantly asked him for articles.

(1) GSS 86.

(2) Riddle p.57, 66; SAS 38.

(3) Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands was one whose life was changed through reading Sundar's works. She wrote: "How tremendous Sundar's message was for me and for the whole Western world: that in the end everything depended on the living relation between man and Christ. And this message came from a man who had proved his readiness to accept all its consequences". Lonely But Not Alone (Hutchinson 1960). pp. 127-132.

(4) Riddle p.60.

He wrote articles and books in Urdu, and then, with friends like A.J. Appasamy or T.E. Riddle, worked out an English translation.⁽¹⁾ In this way, between 1922 and 1929 he completed eight short books,⁽²⁾ some of which had a very wide circulation, parts of them being translated into over forty languages, and bringing great blessing wherever they were read.

Tibet, which was closed to foreign missionaries, held a fascination for him, and there men of his acquaintance had died as Christian martyrs. The death of a martyr held a strange attraction for him also. We do not know for certain how he died, but it may have been a martyr's death, for in April, 1929, in failing health he set out on a journey to Tibet, from which he never returned. At the age of thirty-nine, Sundar Singh had followed his Master to the end.

Sundar Singh left no works of systematic theology. His writings are mainly descriptive of the Christian Way, and tell of his own Christian experience, and that of people whom he has met. He teaches in parables - simple illustrations from nature and human life - and usually, like his Master, leaves the story to convey its own meaning. ⁽³⁾

(1) Riddle P.68. A.J. Appasamy: printed circular letter dated 1.12.65.

(2) 1. At the Master's Feet. Tr. A. and R. Parker (CLS, Madras, 1923)
Reprinted, CLS, 1965 (MF)
2. Reality and Religion. Tr. A.J. Appasamy. (London, 1924).
3. The Search after Reality. Tr. T.E. Riddle (London, 1924).
4. Meditations on various Aspects of the Spiritual Life. Tr. T.E. Riddle
(London, 1925).
5. Visions of the Spiritual World. Tr. T.E. Riddle. (London, 1926).
6. With and Without Christ. Tr. T.E. Riddle. (London, 1929).
7. The Real Pearl. Tr. M.R. Robinson. First English edn. CLS, Madras, 1966 (RP)
8. The Real Life. Tr. J.W. Peoples. First English edn., CLS, Madras 1966. (HL)

(I have had the privilege of reading the proof-sheets of this book: page numbers refer only to galley-proofs).

(3) In the exposition of Sundar Singh's theology which follows I am much indebted to the work of F. Heiler.

The Nature of Sundar Singh's Spiritual Life and Experience.

The basis of Sundar Singh's theology is his direct experience of Jesus Christ: for him as for St. Paul, Christian life goes back to a definite, clear-cut experience of the Risen Christ. As Heiler says,

"Sundar Singh knows one kind of theology only, the theologia experimentalis, or perhaps it is truer to say: he has one sole criterion in religious matters - personal experience of salvation. The sworn enemy of all theological intellectualism, he rejects both those definite abstract conceptions which are the contribution of philosophy to theology and that subtle logic which attempts to construct a uniform theological system ... Expertus sum is the only proof that he can offer for the joyful assurance of his faith." (1)

His spiritual life is, therefore, like Paul's, founded on constant communion with Christ through prayer. And, unlike so many Hindu mystics - not merely advaitins but even those of the bhakti tradition - his prayer is not just a process of self-immersion in the Absolute, but rather a continuous dialogue, a "Practice of the Presence of Christ", in which the distinction between himself and the personal Christ remains clear.

"He never loses himself in that barren meditation and self-absorption practised by so many holy Brahmins and Buddhists ... He begins every season of prayer with meditation on a passage of Scripture... His prayer differs ... from the formless contemplation of many mystics by his use of the word 'Thou' ... (2) As he himself says, 'One simple prayer to Jesus helped me more than all my meditations... Through prayer we learn to know God.' (3)

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- (1) GSS 132. cp. RP 25: "God does not want us to try to prove His existence... But it is His will that His people bear witness to Him by the joy they find in this life-giving sweet fellowship, because, compared with intellectual arguments, the testimony of this real personal experience is more effective."
- (2) GSS 103.
- (3) Quoted in GSS 104. The 'dialogue' of prayer is nevertheless often a wordless one. He writes: "The language of prayer is a language without words. When God speaks to the soul we have an immediate apprehension of His meaning, something like what occasionally happens in conversation when you know what the other man is going to say before he says it." SAS 101

For Sundar Singh the aim of true prayer is union with God, but this is the union of two free personalities, rather than of absorption in the divine. In his own words,

"If we want to rejoice in God we must be different from Him; the tongue could taste no sweetness if there were no difference between it and that which it tastes." (1)

In common with many Hindu mystics, the experience of union was for him frequently an ecstatic one, and he has left a description of some of these ecstatic moments in his book Visions of the Spiritual World. For much of his life he experienced this ecstatic "gift from God" as frequently as eight to ten times a month, and it usually lasted an hour or two.

"From meditation he passes into mental prayer from which he 'glides' (as he says himself) into ecstasy." (2)

These ecstasies were in a waking, not a dream state (3).

When questioned once about their nature, the Sadhu replied:

"There are pearls in the sea, but to get them you have to dive to the bottom. Ecstasy is a dive to the bottom of spiritual things. It is not a trance; but it is like a dive, because, as a diver has to stop breathing, so in Ecstasy the outward senses must be stopped." (4)

Always the ecstasy was set in the same scene - Paul's "Third Heaven" - and always at its centre was the Living Christ. Appasamy describes these ecstatic experiences as follows :

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- (1) GSS 242. Cp. Rabindranath Tagore's lyric: "What is the use of salvation if it means absorption? I like eating sugar, but I have no wish to become sugar". Quoted in Appasamy: What is Moksha? p91.
 - (2) GSS 109.
 - (3) SAS 141.
 - (4) *ibid* p.132.

"In the visions which he saw during his ecstasy, Christ was always in the centre, radiant with beauty and always smiling a sweet and loving smile. Around the throne of Christ were multitudes of saints and angels. In his visions Sundar Singh talked with these spiritual beings and placed before them the problems which were troubling him. They were immediately solved for him. Sundar Singh said that many of the thoughts and illustrations which he used were given to him while in a state of ecstasy. Resurrection, Judgment, Heaven and Hell were the main themes of his visions. He was also convinced that in his ecstasy his thought was clearer and more intense than in his normal life." (1)

The Sadhu's life was completely selfless, and he frequently underwent hardship and suffering. His asceticism, however, was not the rigid asceticism of the hatha yoga. His sole aim through his ascetic practices was

"To bear witness to Christ's love and grace, and to share with his brethren something of the fullness of that peace and joy with which his heart is filled." (2)

He rejects yoga as a discipline, and writes:

"I did not find much help in Yoga. It only assisted me up to a certain point. But as this help was not spiritual, it was useless. It used to astonish me that Jesus did not tell us to practise concentration, or to do spiritual exercises." (3)

"To him the mystic way is not the via negativa of self-conscious renunciation, but just a simple quiet life of Prayer and self-sacrificing Service." (4)

In describing his own spiritual life the Sadhu speaks often of the Peace of the Christian way, of the Joy of suffering, and of this life of union as Heaven upon Earth:

"In whatever circumstances I may be, His Presence gives me a peace which passes all understanding." (5)

(1) The Cross is Heaven p.27

(2) GSS 237.

(3) ibid p.238. For a different view of Christian yoga compare A.S. Appasamy, Fifty Years' Pilgrimage of a Convert (CLS 1940) Chap. VIII, The Use of Yoga in Prayer.
J.M. Dechanet, O.S.B., Christian Yoga (Burns Oates, London, 1960).

(4) SAS 84.

(5) GSS 113.

In his own adventurous life he found peace and joy in the midst of suffering, and he vividly illustrates the nature of suffering by telling a story of a doctor striking a weakly, new-born baby, in order to make it cry and so begin to breathe: (1)

"Through suffering God strikes us in love", he writes. "The Cross is the key of Heaven ... The Cross will bear those who bear the Cross, until it bears them up to heaven, into the actual Presence of the glorious Redeemer." (2)

And again, after his imprisonment at Ilom, he writes,

"Christ's Presence has turned my prison into a heaven of blessing" (3)

Sundar Singh's Method of Preaching and Teaching

The Sadhu's method of teaching was that of his Master - the use of parables. He draws his examples from scenes of everyday life, from nature, from his own experience, from books he has read, and stories he has heard, including tales from Indian folk-lore, and often from his rich imagination. Archbishop Soderblom writes:

"To the Sadhu a parable is more than a picture or a sudden flash of inspiration. His parables are not accidental; in his mind they have the stability of articles of faith. Indeed, the pictures which he has discovered in giving rein to his imaginative powers are his theology." (4)

Heiler compares the method of the Old Testament prophets, of Jesus Himself, and of Gautama Buddha, and comments,

"When the Sadhu has found an apposite picture for a spiritual experience, or for some Christian doctrine, his need of explanation is satisfied. Parable takes the place of logic. By means of a parable light is thrown upon a specific point; the rest is left in darkness." (5)

So, too, Streeter and Appasamy write:

"For him an analogy or illustration is not merely a means to establish an argument; it is often the argument itself." (6)

(1) MF 43.

(2) GSS 117, 118. Heiler points out that "The Cross will bear those who bear the Cross" is taken from the Imitatio Christi of Thomas à Kempis, a favourite book of the Sadhu - Si libenter portas crucem, portabit te et ducet te ad desideratum finem; cp. the title The Cross is Heaven, chosen by Appasamy for his anthology of previously unpublished articles by the Sadhu.

(3) GSS 119.

(4) GSS 135.

(5) *ibid.*

(6) SAS 53.

Sundar Singh was not interested in producing a logically consistent scheme of theology, and indeed he insisted very strongly on the precedence of "heart" over "head". (1) Yet it is interesting that in fact he is here following a recognized Indian pattern of inference, that of "analogy" (upamana), which is in some schools (2) held to constitute a separate basis of knowledge. Many religious leaders, such as Ramakrishna, have used this method widely. When doctrinal questions were put to Sundar Singh he did not reply with a closely-reasoned argument, but instead was often able to give a vivid parable or analogy which threw immediate light on the problem. For instance, on the consciousness of sin he writes:

"It is a healthy sign to feel that we are sinners. It is dangerous when we do not feel it. Once while bathing in the river Sutlej I sank deep into the water. Above my head were tons of water and yet I did not feel the burden at all. When I came back to the bank, I lifted a pot filled with water and found it very heavy. As long as I was in the water I did not feel the weight. Similarly a sinner does not feel that he is a sinner as long as he lives in sin." (3)

Sometimes his "analogies" were simple examples from his own experience, like this one. Sometimes they were based on his ecstatic visions. In some mysterious way, he felt that he was "given" the needed answer: without going through any logical process of reasoning the right analogy came to his lips, and he was able to speak in a way which carried far more conviction to his hearers than a reasoned argument would have done.

"By immediate illumination from God he reached the truth in a more direct way than through the pieced-together logic of the intellectual. This gave him certainty, so he went his own way confident that his gospel was not after man but by revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1.11): He believed that it was with him as it had been with Paul who said, 'It pleased God ... to reveal His Son to me' (Gal.1.15-16)". (4)

- (1) SAS Chap. VII.
- (2) e.g. Mimamsa, Advaita, Nyaya. See N. Smart, Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy p.206 f. "The stock example is of a person going into the forest who has been told by a forester that a wild ox is rather like a cow. He perceives a wild ox, for the first time, and correctly concludes, on the basis of the similarity with the cow, that it is indeed a wild ox". An argument in India can often be settled by citing a striking analogy or an appropriate proverb.
- (3) SAS 166 f. The story is repeated in MF 15.
- (4) Riddle p.92.

And yet the teaching of the Sadhu, when seen as a whole, has a logical coherence -

"not because he aims at system, but because his teaching is the spontaneous expression of prolonged meditation on the New Testament by a man whose own personality has attained to inward unity." (1)

Despite the fact that most of his teaching is given in this parabolic fashion, despite the fact that he wrote no theological treatises, and indeed had an attitude approaching contempt for the systematization of dogmatic theology, Sundar Singh's teaching deals with almost the whole range of what we understand as systematic theology. So far other Indian theologians have not followed up his methods, though Appasamy has been greatly influenced by him. Yet it may be that eventually other great saints will arise in the Indian Church, like him in his Bible-knowledge, experience and "intuition", and yet with a deeper theological knowledge which will lead to a more comprehensive statement of Christian doctrine. It might prove eventually that in the history of the Indian Church and its thought Sundar Singh was actually more important for his theology and its method than for his ascetic way of life and his success as an evangelist. (2)

It will be illuminating now to turn to what Sundar Singh has to say in his various writings on some of the main Christian doctrines.

(1) SAS 53.

(2) Compare, however, the judgment of H.W. Schomerus: "Er ist ein ganz ausgezeichneter Prediger und Missionar, und was noch mehr wiegt, ein tief innerlich frommer Christ, aber zu wenig Theologe und Prophet, um meines Erachtens der sein zu können, der den Kampf, den das Christentum in Indien zu führen hat, zur Entscheidung bringen wird. Er wird die Entscheidung vorbereiten können, sie aber schwerlich selbst herbeiführen". Indien und das Christentum (3 vols, Halle/Saale, 1931); Vol. II p. 178.

1. The Doctrine of God

Sundar Singh's theology is thoroughly Christocentric, and has been learnt at the feet of Christ.

"Here and now we are incapable of seeing Him, our Creator, our Father, the Giver of Life. That is why He became flesh; He took a human limited form in order that men might thus be able to behold Him". (1)

We cannot see or experience God, except through Christ. (2) Yet we know that God, as well as demanding our love, loves us. He is the premasagara, the Ocean of Love. (3) Like the Hindu bhaktas (4), Sundar Singh compared God to a Mother, who not only loves her child, but needs the love of her child in return (5). Throughout his teaching, it is the conception of God's Love, and His Peace which prevails, rather than His Wrath. God's judgment is thought of as an automatic internal process which works on the unrepentant, rather than as an expression of the Divine wrath, for God is seen always in terms of Christ, and Christ, in the Sadhu's homely phrase, "is never annoyed with anyone." (6)

2. Creation

God has created the world in order that men may share His Love:

"He imparts life, because it is of the very essence of His nature to create. To give men real joy through His creative Presence is of the very essence of His Love." (7)

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- (1) Quoted in GSS 147.
(2) Compare infra p. 266 for his teaching on the Trinity.
(3) GSS 136. God is also described as "Ocean of Reality" RL 7
(4) For one example among thousands, cp. Tukaram:
 "When I meet Thee, I will tell Thee the secret of my love;
 together we will eat a sweet meal of joy.
 This is how a Mother and her child behave."
 transl. J.N. Fraser and K.B. Marathi. Quoted in A.J. Appasamy,
 Temple Bells (1930 Edn.) p. 106.
(5) GSS 138. cp. WW 62; RP 4
(6) SAS 65.
(7) GSS 143.

Sundar Singh explicitly rejects Vedantic monism: the world is not identical with God, but is His creation:

"The Indian seer", he writes, "lost God in Nature; the Christian mystic, on the other hand, finds God in Nature." (1)

Yet nature does reveal God:

"In countless ways God's infinite qualities are revealed. Each part, according to its own capacity reflects one aspect of the nature of God. (2)

There is a very interesting passage in one of his visions, where he describes the relation of the created world to God in a way slightly reminiscent of Ramana's "body-soul" analogy (3) and then describes in his own way the work of Christ and of the Holy Spirit as Agents in creation. As the passage is typical of the Sadhu's "visionary" insights we shall quote it in full:

"On another occasion I asked, 'Whence is Life?' I was told that the one source of Life is behind everything. Our clothes are warm, because the body which they conceal is warm. There is no heat in the clothes; that comes from the body within. Just so the life in all living creatures is derived from the one source of Life behind. Their Life is from the Giver of Life. Again, just as our body is hidden by our clothes, but the shape of the clothes as well as the heat comes from the body inside, so all the vegetables and animals that we see are but the outward forms upheld by the Giver of Life.

"I saw waves of light and love coming out from Christ, in whom dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead embodied. These give spiritual life. Also in a mysterious way these waves of life and love give life to living creatures of all grades. Matter and motion cannot produce life. The source of life is life.

"I was told that the waves of light which I saw were the Holy Spirit. Just as the moon seems to be straight overhead wherever we stand, so the glorious Christ with the waves coming out of Him was seen here, there and everywhere. I saw crowds of people with glorious bodies, all saying, 'He is near me', 'He is near me'." (4)

(1) *ibid*

(2) *ibid*

(3) *v. infra* p. 348.

(4) SAS 131 f. op. RL 6: "Though the Creator has created the whole world which exists in and through Him, yet this Creation itself is not God nor is it a part of His existence. But, nevertheless, it does not exist separately or apart from His Being."

Taking this positive attitude to the work of creation, it is natural that Sundar Singh regards created matter as something real and good, rather than as illusory, and so separates himself clearly from the maya attitude of Hinduism. He writes:

"This is where I entirely disagree with the Hindu idea of renunciation. I do not call myself a Sannyasi, for a Sannyasi means one who renounces. He renounces the world because he thinks everything in it is evil, but I think that all is good. The world is all the property of my Father, and is therefore my property. If I renounce the world I renounce some of the gifts which my Heavenly Father gives me out of His Love. Therefore I do not renounce the world, but only the evil in it." (1)

And so it comes about that, like St. Francis, to whom his friend Stokes had introduced him, and whom he often mentions, he has an intense love for Nature:

"Nature speaks, but without words. Man expresses these inarticulate murmurs of Nature in human speech." (2)

He loves Nature, not for its own sake, but because it declares the glory of God - in this coming closer to the thought of the Hebrew prophets and psalmists than to St. Francis. (3) Natural theology yields its message only to those who have already received God's revelation in Scripture:

"The Bible and the Book of Nature are both written in spiritual language by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit being the author of life, all Nature, instinct with life, is the work of the Holy Spirit, and the language in which it is written is spiritual language. Those who are born again have the Holy Spirit for their mother. So to them the language of the Bible and of Nature is their mother-tongue, which they easily and naturally understand." Only, "the message of the Bible is simple, direct and straightforward, whereas the message of the Book of Nature has to be spelt out carefully letter by letter." (4)

3. Man and Sin

Man is God's creature, but he is a sinner, and

"One sin, the smallest sin, even an evil thought, is sufficient to destroy our hope and to keep us outside the Kingdom." (5)

(1) SAS 88 f. cp. WW 35.

(2) GSS 145.

(3) cp. SAS 191 f. A great many of Sundar's illustrations are taken from nature and he appears to have made quite a study of natural history. MF 11; RP 19 f; 25.

(4) SAS 193 f.

(5) Cross is Heaven, p. 44. The same thought is differently expressed in MF 15.

Yet sinful as man is, he is made in the image of God - that Image which is to be seen perfectly only in Christ. (1) In another of his visions, describing his heavenly experiences, he says :

"The faces of all the spirits whom I see in heaven look like Christ, but in a lesser degree; just as the image of the Sun is reflected alike in a number of water-pots. Christ is the Image of God - that image in which God created man - this is the true image, but it is only imperfectly stamped on other men. This explains that feeling of recognition of Christ as one known long ago, which is experienced by all on their first entry to the heavenly state. It shows an original connection between man and Christ, even though one does not know it before. All sinners have within themselves a battered image of their Divine Creator, and so when converted they recognize and fall down and worship Him." (2)

Before the "battered" image is restored, however, man has to allow God to deal with his sin. Sunder Singh's teaching on sin is remarkably interesting and original, because he is able to retain many features of the Hindu doctrine of karma, while at the same time rejecting the allied doctrine of samsara, which says that men must constantly be re-incarnated to work out the consequences of their sins in previous existences. Sunder Singh does not underestimate the gravity of sin, which he defines as,

"to cast aside the will of God and to live according to one's own will." (3) and whose origin he finds in the fact that

"Satan and men, of their own volition in an unlawful and wrong way, sought to carry out their own desires," (4)

He regards it, ^{however,} as the negation of goodness, rather than as an active principle of Evil: (5)

"Sin has no independent existence; no one can say, therefore, that it is something which has been created. It is only a name for a state of mind, or a disposition... Satan can only injure that which has already been created; he has no power to create... Sin or evil, therefore, has no independent existence; it is merely the absence or the negation of good." (6)

(1) In one passage (RF 26, 27) he writes of a "divine seed", or "inner light" in man, "which never inclines to sin or evil. However evil and wicked a man may be ... this seed is not destroyed."

(2) SAS 124.

(3) MF 13.

(4) MF 14.

(5) Compare the similar view of K.C. Sen, v. supra p. 57.

(6) GSS 164.

This may not strike us as fully adequate, but there is no doubt that Sundar Singh was aware of the power of sin. As to the effect of sin, and its punishment, he feels that sin brings with it its own effects:

"God does not judge sinners; it is sin which judges them, and they must die in their sins... God has never sent anyone to hell... it is sin which drives souls into hell." (1)

Heiler comments,

"In a remarkable way the primitive thought of karma is separated from the samsara conception and united with Johannine ideas - a clear example of a creative synthesis of Christian and Indian thought." (2)

Because man is fallen, he sins; (3) he is unable in his own power to do what is good. And that sin, in the nature of things, brings with it its own retribution, through the internal change and hardening of a man's character, the degeneration of his whole personality, in an inevitable process which might even be called karma. This karma, the result of our sinful actions, it is which casts us into hell, unless we avail ourselves of the salvation offered in Christ. (4)

Streeter and Appasamy identify two influences behind this view of sin - one the Sadhu's "passionate apprehension of the Love of God", especially as it is portrayed in St. John's Gospel, and the other his familiarity with the Hindu conception of karma, which he interprets in a new and original way by making the retribution "the result of an internal change, organic to the personality", while karma "represents it as dependent upon circumstances predominantly external". (5)

The Problem of Pain

According to the doctrine of karma, there is no possibility of forgiveness, and all suffering is penal, the penalty for sins committed in this or in previous

(1) GSS 140. So also MF 16.

(2) GSS 142.

(3) For the Fall, cp. WW 31.

(4) For an interesting exposition of Sundar Singh's teaching on karma see Appasamy, What is Moksha? pp. 222 ff.

(5) SAS 159.

lives. Sundar Singh rejects the view that suffering must be penal. He writes:

"God is love, and therefore He will not punish," (1)

and illustrates the statement by the story of how a little bird was one day driven by a gale of wind into his lap, and so escaped from a pursuing hawk:

"So the strong wind of suffering drives us into the lap of God." (2)

In his rejection of the idea of penal suffering and eternal punishment, Sundar is far removed from the stern teaching of Nehemiah Goreh. (3) In effect he separates God's love from the karma-like, automatic process of retribution. There is indeed suffering, and often it is the penalty for sin, but God is not the author of that penalty, and His only desire is to save the sinner.

Suffering, then, when recognized as "a medicine", or an opportunity for learning more of God's love, is to be welcomed, and so Sundar welcomed it in his own life. He writes:

"We praise Thee, O Lord, for the joys and sufferings which thou hast sent us in the past and which thou sendest us now. By bearing thy Cross will the bliss of Heaven become very sweet to us. For he who has not endured suffering cannot know the reality of joy." (4)

He gives the illustration of the pearl-oyster, which produces a pearl because of irritation and suffering, and explains how the spiritual life - "the Real Pearl" - "cannot be attained without suffering and tribulation." (5)

(1) SAS 160.

(2) *ibid.* p. 161.

(3) *v. supra* p. 129.

(4) SAS 164. So WW 48. He describes the Cross as "The Key of Heaven", MF 42.

(5) RF 13, 14.

4. The Person of Christ

Christ is fully God, and in Him alone God is fully revealed.

To know Him is to know that He is divine.

"What do theologians and philosophers know about the divinity of Christ? Go instead to the 'specialists' in religion, to mystics, prophets, and men of prayer." (1)

He easily accepts the idea of the Incarnation, and vividly illustrates it. Christ is like a king going about incognito among his people, in order that He may be able to help them. Men saw Him, and still see Him, but do not recognize His divinity. He gives the illustration of a country peasant who saw a red glass bottle which had been filled with milk. Because of the redness of the appearance he could not tell that the bottle contained milk. So men without faith and direct experience cannot accept the divinity of Christ; (2)

"Faith in the Divinity of Christ grows out of the immediate experience of the heart." (3)

Another homely illustration is taken from the practice of crossing rivers on inflated goat-skins. One crosses "on air", but the air cannot support one unless it is confined in the skin:

"So God to help man had to become incarnate. The Word of life was made flesh. He will carry those who want to cross the river of this world to heaven. 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father'. We can see the living Father in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ." (4)

His conception of the Incarnation of Christ is quite different from that of Hindu avatars:

"Krishna says: 'In every age I am born to save the good and to destroy the wicked.' (5) Jesus on the contrary, came to save sinners." (6)

(1) GSS 134.

(2) *ibid.* p. 148.

(3) *ibid.* p. 162.

(4) SAS 57.

(5) Gita IV. 8

(6) GSS 244; *op. WW* 19, 20. Brahmabandhab made the same point, *v. supra* p. 215.

In one of his visions he puts the following words into the mouth of Christ:

"I took on a mortal body so that in it I might give a ransom for the sins of the world; and when the work of salvation was completed for sinners (John 19.30), then that which was immortal transfigured what was mortal into glory. Therefore after the resurrection only those were able to see Me who had received spiritual sight. (Acts 10. 40,41)". (1)

For him there is no contradiction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of Faith. (2) On his visit to Palestine he rejoiced to follow in the steps of the Master, while at the same time his whole Christian hope is based on communion with the Eternal Christ:

"It is the living Christ who makes Christianity", he writes. "The Holy Sepulchre has stood empty for nearly two thousand years. My heart too stands open to the Lord. He lives in me; He is the Living Christ because He goes on living in the lives of Christians. True Christians are not those who say they are Christians, but those who possess Christ." (3)

This stress on the indwelling Christ is made very clear in some words he puts in the mouth of Christ Himself:

"The womb of Mary where in a fleshy form I had my abode for a few months, was not a place so blessed as the heart of the believer in which for all time I have My home and make it a heaven. (Luke 9. 27,28)" (4)

5. The Work of Christ.

Like many Indian Christians, Sundar Singh concentrates more on faith-union with Christ than on the detailed explanation of what took place on the Cross. Yet he constantly dwells on Christ's death, and especially on its revelation of the Love of God.

"Christ knew that neither silver nor gold, nor diamonds nor any other jewels, would suffice to procure life to the soul, but that what was needed was the surrender of life for life, the surrender of soul in order to save the souls of men. That is why He gave His life for the redemption of the world." (5)

(1) MF 5.

(2) Compare the heart-searching of Chakkarai on this matter, v. infra P.444.

(3) GSS 157.

(4) MF 52. Compare Eckhart: "The Father speaks the word into the soul, and when the Son is born, every soul becomes Mary". Quoted in Appasamy, What is Moksa? p. 190.

(5) GSS 150.

Here we have surely something very closely approaching the substitutionary theory of the Atonement. And the idea is further elaborated, in terms of self-sacrifice, in a number of parables he gives, such as that of a man who gives his life in the act of digging a tunnel under a mountain in order to provide a way between two villages; ⁺⁽¹⁾ of a father who for the sake of his badly injured son gives his blood for a transfusion, and so dies; (2) and of a mother-bird who, when the tree in which her nest is built is set on fire, stays there and dies with her young rather than trying to escape. (3)

For him there appears to be no difficulty in combining a number of "pictures" of the meaning of the work of Christ, and holding them simultaneously. He speaks of it as 'cleansing', as well as engrafting into Christ.

"This cleansing can only take place through faith... The Atonement and the Blood which washes us from our sins means that we are grafted into Christ, I in Him and He in me. The Branch which is grafted into the tree is bitter, but once it is ingrafted the sweet sap of the tree flows into the branch and makes it sweet." (4)

Forgiveness and salvation come through faith in Christ.

"Jesus Christ saves His people from their sins: this is the very heart of Christianity. Those who believe in Him He frees from guilt by the gift of forgiveness; and He frees them from the dominion of sin by enabling them to overcome it." (5)

There is no kanna marga, no possibility of obtaining salvation by our own works. "Other/religions say, 'Do good and you will become good'. Christianity says, 'Be in Christ, and you will do good.'" (6) It is impossible for us to achieve our own salvation", Sunder says (7) and gives the illustration of a

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- (1) GSS 150.
 - (2) MF 18.
 - (3) RF 23.
 - (4) GSS 155.
 - (5) *ibid.* 165.
 - (6) SAS 61.
 - (7) GSS 165.

man who has fallen into a well, who cannot climb out by his own effort, but must have a rope thrown to him from above.

He has no use for the view, common in liberal theology of the twenties, that Jesus preached a Gospel without a Mediator, and he gives his own exegesis of the parable of the Prodigal Son in order to refute those who used that parable in an attempt to demonstrate that God forgives sinful man directly, with no need for the mediation of His Son. The exegesis is indeed a strange one. The prodigal, as His Father's son, knew the way back to the Father; the parable is, therefore, for Christians who have become careless in their spiritual life, but not for non-Christians "who do not know the way to the Father", and so stand in need of a Mediator to come in search of them. (1) The exegesis may be forced, but the implication is clear, and Sundar Singh repeatedly stresses it. For those who are without Christ a Redeemer is needed, not merely a great teacher :

"Christ did not come to teach us, but to redeem us from sin and punishment. Simply by His teaching He could not have redeemed sinners; He had to lay down His life." (2)

And again, "The Deity of Christ and Redemption are absolutely fundamental truths. Without them Christianity has no message left; it is then no more than a system of ethics like Buddhism." (3)

As Streeter and Appasamy point out (4), the Sadhu does not think of Christ's death as a propitiatory sacrifice. It is rather a "work" which accomplishes something positive, like the digging of a tunnel under the mountain; or it provides an active "Power", like a life-giving blood-transfusion. A Mother, whose son has been imprisoned until he can pay a large fine, toils all day carrying stones, until she earns enough money for her son's release. From his prison-window the son sees her, toiling with her bruised and bleeding hands.

(1) GSS 153 f.
(2) ibid p. 160.
(3) ibid.
(4) SAS 64.

Here we have a combination of moral influence - the sight of the suffering mother - and of positive achievement - the earning of the money to pay the fine. When he is set free, the son says,

"I was saved by my mother's hard work, by her toil, by the wounds on her body, by her blood."

And so, says the Sadhu,

"Those who realize that God became incarnate and shed His precious blood to save us from our sins, will not like to commit the sin which gives such suffering to their God." (1)

God's love, demonstrated in Christ, is suffering love, self-sacrificing love, a love which has power to achieve the conversion and transformation of a sinner. And when a man has accepted that love he is ready to live the Christian life, and to discover for himself that "the Cross is Heaven".

6. Sanctification - the Life in Christ

Salvation, for Sundar Singh, is not exhausted by the forgiveness of sins, but rather includes all that is known in Reformed Theology as "Sanctification".

"Many people say that salvation is forgiveness of sins, and of course it is partly that. But complete, perfect salvation is freedom from sin, and not merely forgiveness of sins. Jesus Christ came not only to forgive sin, but to make us free from sin. We receive from Christ a new vital power which releases us from sin... To be saved by Christ is to receive new life from Him, to become a new creature." (2)

(1) SAS 62.

(2) GSS 166.

This statement is, of course, perfectly Pauline (2 Cor. 5,17), but it is worth noting it specially, as the idea is later taken up in considerable detail in P. Chenchiah's "new creation" theology. (1)

Justification and Sanctification are closely linked. (2) It is by faith that we are engrafted into Christ, and so become new creatures, able to live the "Life in Christ":

"Even so the sinner cannot do anything good, because his inward disposition is not good. He can only do this when his disposition is altered, and this can only take place when he has been grafted into Christ by faith. When, by a living faith, he is ingrafted into Christ, then he is a new creature who can and ought to lead a new life." (3)

As we are united to Christ by faith, so we become transformed into His likeness. Sundar Singh takes an illustration from nature of the camouflage of certain insects which have come to look like the leaves or sticks on which they rest, or the tiger whose striped skin is like the alternating light and shade of the jungle where he lives:

"So those who live in spiritual communion with God like the saints and angels have a share in Christ's nature, and become transformed into his likeness". (4)

Yet this relationship never becomes the relationship of identity. There is no Vedantic absorption: Christ and the believer maintain in union their separate identities:

"If Christ lives in us, our whole life will become Christ-like. Salt which has been dissolved in water may disappear but it does not cease to exist.

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- (1) cp. Chenchiah: "Salvation is not just sinlessness but lifefulness".
v. infra p. 373.
 - (2) These are not, of course, the terms which Sundar Singh uses.
 - (3) GSS 168.
 - (4) ibid. 170. cp. MF 29,30.

We know it is there when we taste the water. Even so the indwelling Christ, although He is unseen, will become visible to others through the love which He shares with us." (1)

This illustration is of exceptional interest, as it is taken from the Chandogya Upanisad, where it is given as a demonstration of the fundamental Vedantic proposition tat tvam asi, "That art thou". (2) There the meaning is that Being (Brahman) is present everywhere, even though it may not be visible. The seer, Uddalaka Aruni, says to his son Svetaketu:

"Verily, indeed, my dear, you do not perceive Being here,
Verily, indeed, it is here.

This which is the finest essence - this whole world has that as its soul.
That is Reality. That is Atman. That art thou, Svetaketu."

Sundar Singh's meaning is rather that Christ dwells in us, and, while unseen to the natural eye, is yet there in His own identity, changing the quality of our life into conformity with His. For the Christian, faith union with Christ maintains the personality both of the believer and of Christ. In Sundar Singh's own words,

"Through faith we are in God and God is in us. But God remains God,
and we remain His creatures." (3)

As illustrations of this mystical union which involves interpenetration combined with continued ^{self-}identity he suggests coal and fire, or a sponge and water. (4)

Sundar Singh is aware of the attraction for Hindus of the Jehannine mahavakya "I in Thee and Thou in Me" because of its imagined similarity to their own mahavakya "tat tvam asi." He repudiates the similarity:

(1) GSS 170.

(2) Chand. Up. 6.13. Sundar Singh had read the main Upanisads by the age of sixteen. (Sadhu p. 4)

(3) GSS 225

(4) ibid p. 242. cp. MF 7,8.

"Muhammadan and Hindu mystics have mistakenly sought an absorption into the Great Spirit like the sinking of the river in the ocean. The ideal (sc. the Christian ideal) is to be in, but not to lose yourself in, the Great Spirit".

Again "Hindus commonly like St. John's Gospel; 'I in You and You in Me' appeals to them. But they are apt to be confused by their Pantheism. Christ's oneness with the Father and His oneness with ourselves is different ... Pantheism which blurs a distinction between me and God loses the main point. If I am to enjoy God, I must be different from God. The tongue could not enjoy sweetmeats if there were no difference between it and them." (1)

There is no doubt that for Sundar Singh living union with Christ is the basic Christian experience. He is, says Heiler,

"an outstanding representative of a Christianity of personal experience. His basal thought, that the essence of the Christian life consists in personal experience, involving a thorough change of heart, conditions throughout his conception of God, Christ and the Church." (2)

As a result, we do not find in him a systematic exposition of the "Way of Salvation", though, as we have seen, his teaching on the Death of Christ is thoroughly Scriptural. The dominating feature of his thought is "Life in Christ", just as it was for St. Paul.

"Just because the decisive element is contact with the living Christ, the 'plan of salvation' can never be of the essence of the Christian faith.... Heart-fellowship with Christ is the indispensable preliminary to a right understanding of the plan of salvation". (3)

That is Heiler's comment, and it is true that for the Sadhu personal experience of salvation must precede all attempts at theological exposition.

(1) SAS 236 f.

(2) GSS 136.

(3) GSS 156.

For Sundar Singh, the life in Christ is inevitably a life of bearing the Cross. Those who live in Christ cannot avoid sharing his suffering, and Sundar's own experience was that the bearing of the Cross brings the fullest joy and peace. That was the life which he preferred beyond all others:

"His presence gives me a peace which passeth all understanding, no matter in what circumstances I am placed. Amidst persecution I have found peace, joy and happiness.... To follow Him and bear His Cross is so sweet and precious that, if I find no Cross to bear in Heaven, I shall plead before Him to send me as His missionary, if need be to Hell, so that there at least I may have the opportunity to bear His Cross. His presence will change even Hell into Heaven." (1)

Prayer

For Sundar Singh the Christian life is a life of constant communion with God in prayer and meditation. We shall merely give two of his striking illustrations:

"In a certain desert where there was no sign of water, there was a tree with green leaves bearing fruit. The reason was that the long roots of the tree found a secret spring of water deep under the ground and thus were nourished by it. Prayer is the hidden root which goes to the hidden spring which is God." (2)

And again: "We should live in the world like a diver, who, when diving for pearls in the ocean, either holds his breath that water may not enter his lungs, or else continues to breathe through an air tube as long as he is in the water. We must be in the world but not of the world. We must be like these two kinds of divers. We must stop breathing the air of the world and, being dead to it, should be alive unto God; and, by means of the tube of prayer that reaches up to the Eternal God, should breathe the Holy Spirit. Thus while living in the world we shall find the precious pearl of salvation." (3)

(1) The Cross is Heaven p. 39 f.

(2) CH 92.

(3) WW 69.

7. The Trinity

His teaching on the Trinity is thoroughly orthodox, and he makes no attempt to "Vedantize" it. He puts words in the mouth of Christ:

"I and the Father and the Spirit are one, as both heat and light are in the sun, although light is not heat, and heat is not light." (1)

In another passage he writes:

"Christ is the Light of the World. The Holy Spirit is the Heat of the world." (2)

Here we see a reflection of early Eastern teaching like that of the Cappadocian Fathers, which Sunder Singh had perhaps come across in his period in college, or from reading and conversation with his many theological friends.

While accepting the Trinity, however, he is always Christocentric in his thought; our immediate experience is of Christ, and it is only through Him, in the power of the Spirit, that we know the Father. It is - as so frequently in Sunder Singh - in the description of one of his ecstatic visions that we find this point very clearly made. He writes:

"The first time I entered Heaven I looked round about and asked, 'But where is God?' And they told me, 'God is not to be seen here any more than on earth, for God is Infinite. But there is Christ, He is God, He is the Image of the Invisible God, and it is only in Him that we can see God, in Heaven as on earth.' And streaming out from Christ I saw, as it were, waves shining and peace-giving, and going through and among the Saints and Angels, and everywhere bringing refreshment, just as in hot weather water refreshes trees. And this I understood to be the Holy Spirit." (3)

(1) GSS 163: So MF 8.

(2) SAS p.237.

(3) SAS 54 f.

8. The Bible

The Sadhu was steeped in the Bible, and on his many travels the New Testament was the only book he carried with him. Söderblom says of him,

"You will scarcely find anyone in the West who has steeped himself more thoroughly in the New Testament and in the Psalter than Sundar Singh." (1)

As a boy he had burnt the Bible, and he could never forget that incident. Later he told a story of how a page of the New Testament, torn up in fury and flung out of a train by one man, became the means of salvation of another man who picked it up, read it, and felt urged to learn more. (2) There can be no question of the Sadhu's devotion to the Bible.

And yet there is no Bibliolatry. The Bible is important as a witness to Christ: it is the written word whose function is to point to the Living Word.

"It is not because I read the Gospel that I know Christ", he says, "but because He revealed Himself to me ... God's Word is only a hand stretched out to point the way to the Lord who is the Truth and the Life." (3)

God uses the Bible to reveal Himself and to lead men to Christ:

"God reveals Himself ever more and more through His Holy Word to all who seek Him with their whole heart.... Thanks to the Word of God, thousands have had the same experience as I have had, and have become united with their Lord and Saviour." (4)

Yet Bible-reading alone is not enough for coming to know Christ: there must be prayer as well, for prayer is essential to all Christian experience:

"No one can understand who Jesus Christ is save those who live with Him. Only when we live with Him in real communion can He show Himself to us." (5)

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- (1) GSS 232.
 - (2) SAS 197 f.
 - (3) GSS 194 f.
 - (4) *ibid.* p.196.
 - (5) GSS 161.

He recognizes that the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and yet he has been written by fallible human writers, and, in truly orthodox fashion, gives the analogy of the divine and human natures in Christ:

"The Holy Spirit is the true author of the Holy Scriptures; I do not mean by that that every Hebrew or Greek word is of Divine inspiration. Just as my clothes are not me, so the words of the Scriptures are only human words.. Christ himself says: 'Just as I clothed myself in human form in order to redeem the human race, so My Word, which is Spirit and Life, is written in human language'; that is, it unites divinely inspired and human elements." (1)

From his own experience of communication with God during his "ecstasies" he gives a very interesting analogy of the way in which he believes that the Bible was written by ordinary men under the inspiration of the Spirit. He writes:

"When I am in ecstasy and speak to the Angels and Saints, it is not in the language of this world, but in a spiritual language without words which seems to come quite naturally. Before I utter a word or move my lips the meaning is out; and this is the same language in which truth was communicated to the authors of Scripture. Afterwards they tried to find words to express what had been revealed to them. But often they may have failed to get just the right word, but the meaning they were trying to express is inspired." (2)

As the Holy Spirit is the Inspirer of Scripture, so the help of the Spirit is needed for its correct understanding :

"The language of the Word of God is spiritual; only he who is born of the Spirit can rightly and completely understand it, whether he is a scholar or a child." (3)

(1) *ibid.* 198.

(2) SAS 202. For "the language of the Spirit" compare MF 10

(3) CSS 199.

We have seen already how the background and content of many of Sundar Singh's visions was provided by the Bible. Lest it should be thought that, in a way perhaps reminiscent of Keshub Chunder Sen's adesh, he put his visionary experiences, his direct ecstatic intuition or pratyaksa on the same plane as the Bible, we must quote the testimony of his friend, translator and biographer, A.J. Appasamy, who says that he

"made it quite clear that even his pratyaksa had to give way to the Bible. He only accepted it if it was in harmony with the Bible." (1)

For Sundar Singh, as for Appasamy, the Bible is the primary and decisive pramana.

Like so many in India the Sadhu has a special preference for St. John's Gospel, but this does not seem to be caused by any special philosophical affinity. The reason is more simple:

"St. John seems to me to have loved Christ more than the other Apostles." (2)

9. Eschatology

We have already seen that Sundar Singh had visions of heaven while still on earth, ecstatic experiences of which he seldom spoke. For him, suffering could be the gateway to Heaven, and a recently published anthology of his writings has the title The Cross is Heaven. There is, therefore, for those who are in Christ, a true foretaste in this life of the life of Heaven, for

"Wherever God is, there is Heaven, or the Kingdom of God; and God is present everywhere, therefore Heaven is everywhere too." (3)

(1) In a letter to the present writer, 11.3.1966.

(2) GSS 200.

(3) RP 29.

His ecstasies gave him many visions of Heaven, usually in pictures very like those of the Apocalypse of St. John, with Christ on His throne always at the centre. He speaks of three Heavens, the first being "Heaven on earth", the state of those who live "in Christ". The second Heaven is an intermediate state, the Paradise of which Christ spoke to the penitent thief, where those dwell for a time who are not sufficiently advanced spiritually to enter the Third Heaven. The third is Heaven proper, to which all the righteous will ultimately attain, and which is visited even in this present life by a privileged few like St. Paul and Sundar Singh himself. (1)

As we have seen, he believes that our actions in this life bring their fruit with them - a belief very close to the Hindu doctrine of karma:

"So, even in this world, the foundations... of heaven and hell are being laid. When, therefore, the soul leaves the body at death it enters that state for which it was prepared here on earth." (2)

There is, however, a thorough rejection of the Hindu belief in samsara, the reincarnation of the soul in one body after another, which Sundar Singh describes as

"a vain attempt to solve the problem of suffering." (3)

In his earlier writings he affirms that

"If we reject our opportunity here, no second chance will be offered to us hereafter." (4)

Later, however, this view is modified, and we read,

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- (1) SAS 116f.
 - (2) GSS 193.
 - (3) *ibid.* 235.
 - (4) GSS 190.

"Thus hell also is a training school, a place of preparation for the eternal Home..... After long wanderings, and by devious paths, sinful man will at last return to Him in whose Image he was created; for this is his final destiny." (1)

"The love of God operates even in Hell", he writes, (2) and here we see the overwhelming concentration on God's love which is so typical of the Sadhu's thought. Though his mind is full of apocalyptic imagery, yet there is little of judgment and punishment in his visions, and the love of Christ at times seems to be stressed almost at the expense of the justice of God - chiefly because God's work of judgment has been detached from Him and given to neutral "karma". Sinners judge themselves, as it were:

"The heavenly light shows the wicked to themselves... They feel so out of place there, they find everything so uncongenial, that they ask to be allowed to go away from Heaven. Men are not turned out of Heaven by God." (3)

There is, then, hope for most people that in the end, because of the love of God which extends even to Hell, they will pass over into Heaven. There are some few, however, including Satan himself, about whom we should not ask. (4)

Here there would appear to be the postulation of hell itself as a kind of "purgatory", and a universalism inspired by belief in the invincible loving purpose of God.

(1) *ibid.* 191. Cp. the title of RP Chap 5: All men will finally repent and turn to God.

(2) SAS 128.

(3) *ibid.* 126 f.

(4) *ibid.* 129.

10. The Church

Like so many leading Indian Christians, Sundar Singh's relationship with the Church is difficult to define. He was baptized in the Anglican Church, studied in one of its theological colleges, obtained from his bishop a preacher's licence, but later asked for that licence to be withdrawn when he discovered that it prevented him from preaching in churches other than Anglican ones. For the rest of his life he exercised his preaching ministry in all churches except the Roman Catholic, wherever men would invite him. As occasion offered, he partook of communion wherever he happened to be. But he was not really interested in the Church as a visible, organized institution, and preferred to think of it as the whole Body of those who belong to Christ:

"I belong to the Body of Christ, that is, to the true Church, which is no material building, but the whole corporate body of true Christians, both those who are living here on earth, and those who have gone into 'the world of light'." (1)

His judgment on the "organized" Church applies also to "Church Dogmatics":

"There are not enough men within the Church who have a sufficiently deep spiritual experience to invest with final authority the ecclesiastical dogmas as they are now taught. Therefore I go straight to God Himself... A revelation which I have received in ecstasy is worth more to me than all traditional Church teaching. Ecclesiasticism and Christianity are not the same thing. (2)

Again he writes,

"If you want spiritual guidance, do not turn to Rationalists or Theologians who are inwardly empty, but go to the Word of God, and you will find strength at the Master's Feet.... Real theological studies are made at the Feet of Jesus Christ." (3)

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- (1) GSS 201. Compare the wording of the Westminster Confession, XXV, 1:
"The catholick or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof...."
- (2) GSS 203.
- (3) *ibid.* 260.

And "We Indians do not want a doctrine, not even a religious doctrine; we have enough and more than enough of that kind of thing; we are tired of doctrines. We need the Living Christ. India wants people who will not only preach and teach, but workers whose whole life and temper is a revelation of Jesus Christ." (1)

There is an obvious danger here. The Sadhu in effect rejects the authority of the Church, and gives first place to the revelation which he himself receives in a state of ecstasy. It is interesting how, despite this "individualism" the teaching of the Sadhu is probably more thoroughly Biblical and "orthodox" in a Western sense, than that of many other Indian Christian theologians.

He is definitely a "solitary" in all his work, and we are told that although four hundred young men wished to become his disciples (2), and a wealthy Christian in South India wished him to set up an ashram or monastery, and was sure that many would come to its support, he refused both offers. His attitude towards corporate worship is therefore somewhat negative:

"It is quite natural", he writes, "that no form of Church service can ever satisfy deeply spiritual people, because such persons already have direct fellowship with God in meditation, and they are always conscious of His blessed Presence in their souls." (3)

The Sadhu-Ideal

This leads us to face the question of the validity, for the Indian Christian Church, of the sadhu-ideal which Sunder Singh adopted for himself, and did so much to popularize. Its particular form in his case is closely related to the sannyasi-ideal in Hinduism and there is no question that - though perhaps some Hindu opponents thought of it as "cheating" - he was able to gain great audiences in India and to witness effectively through his familiar appearance and mode of teaching.

(1) *ibid.* 266.

(2) GSS 207.

(3) *ibid.* 206.

And of course there are many Christian precedents, in the Desert Fathers, the Vagantes, St. Francis and many others. It is not, however, a way of life which has commended itself very much to Protestantism as a whole (1) and there have been those, in both India and the West, who have therefore questioned its efficacy, especially in view of the fact that, following Sundar Singh, there are now many Christian sadhus in India, at least some of whom are far from being genuine.

The genuineness and efficacy of Sundar Singh's ministry as a sadhu seems to be without question. As the Indian Church becomes more truly Indian it may well be that God will raise up other such men, in order to carry out similar special ministries of witness within the Church, and to the world outside. As false prophets arise, so false sadhus too may arise, but the true Christian sannyasis will be known by their fruits and by their life, and there seems to be no reason why there should not be many such dedicated men. Such a ministry can never be the normal one in the Church, which requires the regular ministry of the Word and sacraments, but within the coming Indian Church there must be room for much diversity, and here is a clear pattern to be followed, if not by many, at least by a dedicated few.

The Eucharist

Sundar Singh's view of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is thoroughly Protestant:

- (1) One could, however, instance as rough parallels evangelists like Dr. J. Edwin Orr, who travel widely and live on faith, cp. A.J. Appasamy, Write the Vision: a biography of J. Edwin Orr. (London, 1964).

"I do not believe that bread and wine really become the Body and Blood of Christ. But their effect upon the believer is as great as if it were so... In bread and wine there is nothing special. The Eucharist as a means of grace depends upon our own faith." (1)

Church Order.

So far as Church Order is concerned, he is very definite in his rejection both of the Apostolic Succession, and of the claims of the Roman Church.

On the first he writes:

"I do not believe in the doctrine of Apostolic Succession... The true spiritual succession has been interrupted several times, because not all the consecrated Bishops and Popes were consecrated by the Holy Spirit." (2)

Of Roman claims he says :

"Christ Himself is always within His own, and St. Peter did not leave behind or appoint any successor, but he taught that every true Christian represents Christ on earth.... The rock upon which Christ built his Church is not Peter, but Christ Himself. (3)

The Sadhu believes that already there is a Unity of all true Christians in the Body of Christ:

"In all the Christian Churches where Christ is loved I feel myself among brothers; wherever I find true Christians, there I can say that although their customs and organizations are strange I feel myself at home with them." (4)

"If all sects were to unite into one there would be no more world, there would only be heaven," (5) he writes, thereby revealing a concern also for the visible Church and its unity. But "I do not believe in unions which are artificially engineered...

"External unity is futile. Those alone who are united in Christ are really one in Him and will be one in heaven... I believe only in the interior union of hearts and souls... I do not believe in any particular Church, whether Catholic or Protestant, but I believe in the Body of Christ; that is,

(1) GSS 205.

(2) GSS 213.

(3) *ibid.* p. 204.

(4) *ibid.* p. 208.

(5) *ibid.* p. 209.

in the corporate fellowship of true saints and believers... In answer to the question, 'To which Church do you belong?' I always reply: "To none". "I belong to Christ. That is enough for me." (1)

11. Attitude to Hinduism.

Sundar Singh can never forget the love and devotion of his mother (2) and his attitude towards the non-Christian saints of India is a positive one, like that of Sen, or Upadhyaya or of Justin or Clement:

"Among us in India there are many, many, who lead a holy life." (3)

"There used to be, and there still are, in India, men who live in God without knowing Christ; that is, they do not know his Name." (4)

He accepts the validity of certain kinds of Hindu religious experience, and believes that, in so far as the experience is true and valid, it is attributable to Christ and the Holy Spirit, even when no such acknowledgment is made or realized:

"The Living Christ reveals Himself to every man according to his need... Non-Christian thinkers also have been illuminated by the Sun of Righteousness. Indians have received the Holy Ghost ... Just as every soul that lives breathes in the air, so every soul, whether Christian or non-Christian breathes in the Holy Spirit, even when he knows it not." (5)

That does not, however, mean that there is no need for the specific Christian revelation of Christ. He alone is the true Light, who can fully satisfy.

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- (1) GSS 209, 210.
 - (2) He wrote: "If I do not see my mother in heaven, I shall ask God to send me to hell so that I may be with her". SAS 3. cp. WW 54: "Her bosom was for me my best theological school".
 - (3) GSS 217.
 - (4) *ibid.* 218. op. WW Chap. 2, Non-Christians with Christ. And compare Chakkarai: "When his (sc. the Hindu's) eye opens on another day in another world he will know who has saved him. Till then the veil is on his face; then it will be lifted, and he will behold Him as He is."
 - (5) GSS 218.

Speaking of the Magi, he says,

"In India we have many genuine truth-seekers, who faithfully follow their star; but it is only starlight which guides them. But you Christians have the glory of the Sun." (1)

And again,

"We in India knew already that God is good. But we did not know that He was so good that Christ was willing to die for us.. There is much that is beautiful in Hinduism, but the highest light comes from Christ." (2)

He comes close to a position rather like Farquhar's, and it is not unlikely that through his many friends he was aware of what Farquhar was saying during these very years. (3) He writes:

"Christianity is the fulfilment of Hinduism. Hinduism has been digging channels. Christ is the water to flow through these channels... Non-Christian writers also have received light from the Sun of Righteousness. The Hindus have received of the Holy Spirit ... Every one is breathing air. So every one, Christian as well as non-Christian, is breathing the Holy Spirit, though they do not call it by that name." (4)

Thus Sundar Singh's attitude to Hinduism is very different from that of Nehemiah Goreh or Pandita Ramabai. As Streeter and Appasamy point out, he seldom criticises even the abuses of popular Hinduism, and reserves his criticisms rather for its strong points - the monist viewpoint (5), the doctrine of karma, jnana marga, and the practice of asceticism for its own sake. (6)

Yet the Sadhu denies that he has affiliations with any particular school or "way" of Hinduism. Even bhakti, which might seem the closest to his view, because of his great personal devotion to Christ, is rejected, and Sundar Singh claims that he has been influenced by neither the yoga nor the bhakti schools of thought. (7)

(1) *ibid.* 220.

(2) GSS 219.

(3) e.g. The Crown of Hinduism, 1913; Modern Religious Movements, 1918.

(4) SAS 232.

(5) cp. his interesting logical refutation of advaita in WW 57: "If Maya is possible in Brahman, then Brahman is no longer Brahman, for he has been subordinated to Maya", etc.

(6) SAS 233. cp. WW Chap. 1, a strong critique of asceticism.

(7) *ibid.* 240.

He is even more explicit in his rejection of jnana marga, and indeed of all religion which comes from "the head" rather than "the heart". He writes:

"I met a Hindu Sannyasi who said, 'Jnana marga - that is, Knowledge - is necessary for salvation'. I told him that in order to quench thirst it is necessary to have water, it is not necessary to know that it is composed of oxygen and hydrogen. Some Hindu Sannyasis are very learned men, but they have no peace." (1)

Sundar is here protesting against the dominant strain of Hindu thought. For him religion means love and commitment, not knowledge. Streeter and Appasamy point out that he is reacting against His Hindu environment in much the same way as Paul reacted against the legalistic Judaism of his time. Paul was convinced that men were saved, not by performing the works of the law, but by faith. The Sadhu is convinced that men are saved, not by the jnana beloved of Hinduism, but by love. The first thing in religion, then, is not ritual or works (karma), nor a new philosophy (jnana), but a new heart, (2) and only those who know and love the crucified and risen Christ can understand fully what this means. He writes:

"It is the heart that sees and feels the heart of spiritual reality. My head acquiesces in what I have seen with my heart." (3)

"Knowledge obtained by the head does not go down below the throat. I once picked a stone out of a pool and broke it. About six or seven inches of it were wet, but inside and in the centre that stone was quite dry. That stone was in the water but the water was not in the stone. It is the same with men. Some in the Christian Church know a great deal about Him, but the centre of their heart is dry. Christ is not in their hearts." (4)

The Christian faith can be known only from within. "The man of prayer is the only one whose opinion is worth having in regard to religion. Mystics are the specialists in religion." (5)

(1) SAS 180 f.

(2) *ibid.* 181.

(3) Is this perhaps an approach to Anselm's Fides quaerens intellectum?

(4) SAS 183.

(5) *ibid.* 184.

Although Sundar Singh rejects the main maryas and darsanas of Hinduism (albeit, one would feel, with a certain learning towards Ramanuja and bhakti, a tendency worked out in greater detail later by Appasamy, whom he so deeply influenced), yet he is fully Indian in his way of thinking, and he employs many terms and expressions from the vocabulary of Hinduism. He has no hesitation in taking parables and illustrations from the Vedas and Upanisads (1), and he frequently uses, in a Christian sense, much of the vocabulary of Hinduism. He speaks of maya, of karma, of trishna (spiritual thirst), of samadhi (the state of spiritual ecstasy), of santi (peace), bhakti, maitri (friendship or Agape), of moksa (release or salvation); of God as Prema-sagara (Ocean of Love), as the Antaryamin (2) (inner guide), and as Bhagavan: he speaks of God's Grace as Isvara-prasada, and of Christ's Incarnation as Avatara (3)

Again, he possesses and uses many of the powers of Hindu ascetics.

Heller writes:

"Like them he is able to detach his 'astral body' (manomaya-kaya) (4) from his earthly body and to ascend into the highest heaven (brahma-loka). He is endowed with the gift of heavenly sight and hearing (divyam cakshur and divyam srotram) (5); like them, he has the gift of discerning spirits, the 'understanding of strange hearts' (paracitta-jnana), and the remembrance of a previous existence, (purva-nivasa smrti) (6) not indeed of previous earthly existence, but of an original spiritual contact between the soul and Christ." (7)

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- (1) e.g. the rope and the snake, MF 17; salt dissolved in water, MF 36.
 - (2) v. infra p. 348.
 - (3) GSS 233.
 - (4) He held - as a result of his visions - that our spiritual bodies are inside our material bodies. At death the spiritual body is freed, to go to heaven. Exceptional people (e.g. Paul, St. Francis of Assisi, the author of The Imitation of Christ) "are already so spiritually advanced that they enter the Third Heaven at once." SAS 126 f.
 - (5) The faculty by which he sees and hears in ecstasy. "'St. John', says the Sadhu, 'did not use the word 'ecstasy'; he said 'in the spirit', but he meant the same thing.'" SAS 114.
 - (6) op. his description of his first ecstatic vision of Christ in glory: "I felt when first I saw him as if there were some old and forgotten connection between us, as though He had said, but not in words, 'I am He, through whom you were created.' I felt something the same, only far more intensely, as I felt when I saw my father after an interval of many years. My old love came back to me; I knew I had been his before." SAS 124.
 - (7) GSS 234.

To each of these traditional "powers" he gives, as we have seen, his own special Christian interpretation, "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ". (1)

Conclusion

Sundar Singh is a central and crucially important figure in the history of the Indian Church. During his life-time he was a centre of controversy, and in particular was the object of bitter attacks by certain Jesuits, who claimed that he was an impostor. Those who knew him best, however, always believed in him, and it is significant that he has recently been the subject of a fine full-length study by one of the greatest living Indian theologians, Bishop A.J. Appasamy, who many years previously, with B.H. Streeter, had written a study of the Sadhu during his life-time. (2) These recent studies vindicate the genuineness of Sundar Singh, and indeed it is difficult to read his writings without being convinced of the greatness, as well as the simplicity of the man behind them.

The sources of his theology have been a puzzle to those who have sought to identify him with any single tradition. Heiler places him in the line of the Neo-Platonists, Origen, Dionysius the Areopagite, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Eckhart, Julian of Norwich, and tries also to find many reflections of Luther. A Jesuit, de Grandmaison, says that the Sadhu's piety is "evangelical Christianity which has not developed beyond the Patristic period." (3)

(1) 2 Cor. 10. 5 (RV).

(2) The present writer is convinced that greater weight should be given to the testimony of distinguished men of integrity who knew him intimately, like Appasamy, C.F. Andrews and T.E. Riddle, than to those like H. Hosten, S.J., and O. Pfister who attacked him without knowing or understanding him. Cp. Riddle, p.70.

(3) GSS 224.

Yet probably most of these hypothetical parallels are purely fortuitous. The Sadhu had his boyhood background of the bhakti tradition, in which communion with God, even to ecstasy, was something to be expected and experienced. That deep Indian tradition never left him. He was steeped in the New Testament, and all his teaching is rooted there. We must not forget either his many friends, missionaries and others, who interested him in Western books of devotion like the Imitatio Christi and the works of St. Francis, and in later years he was to meet and talk with renowned mystic theologians like Baron von Hügel. He constantly draws on all these sources, though he never strays far from the evangelical tradition in which he was baptized. His mysticism is practical mysticism, not that of the Western textbooks.

"The fact that the Sadhu uses no terms of mystical classification, neither Christian nor Indian, shows very plainly that his mind is childlike and simple, never dreaming of analyzing the inner religious life." (1)

Yet here we have one who is truly Indian in all his ways and thoughts, who has yet entered fully, not into the Christian tradition of the West, but into the heart of the Gospel. In his own oft-quoted words, "Indians greatly need the Water of Life, but they do not want it in European vessels." (2)

As we come to the end of this study we can do no better than to take Heiler's comparison of him with some of his predecessors whose work we have already considered:

(1) GSS 224.

(2) *ibid.* 232. Cp. WW 25, 26 for a scathing attack on "denationalized" Indian Christians.

"During the last century there have been gifted Indians who were enthusiastic in their admiration for the Person and Teaching of Jesus, like the leaders of the Brahma Samaj: Ram Mohan Roy and Keshab Chandra Sen. But they all represent an artificial blending of Christian and Indian religious ideas; perhaps, to put it more exactly, an attempt to unite 'liberal' Christianity of the rationalistic type with the mystical philosophy of the Upanishads. Almost all of them, without exception, are unable to understand the inwardness of the mystery of the Christian redemption. So their efforts resulted in an attempt to syncretize a somewhat emasculated Christianity with the wisdom of the Vedas, without clearing a path along which the vital and central truths of Christianity could penetrate the spiritual life of India. But that which all these religious and able representatives of an eclectic religion - which attempted to combine Christianity and the Vedas - failed to achieve by conscious effort, Sundar Singh succeeded in doing quite unconsciously. He is an Indian from head to foot, in no way influenced by the intellectual culture of the West. Yet he has taken his stand at the very heart of the Christian life, he lives entirely in 'Biblical' Christianity. This is why he has been able to offer the pure unadulterated Gospel message to the Indians in an Indian form." (1)

(1) GSS 230.

CHAPTER XI

CHRISTIANITY AS BHAKTI MARGA : A. J. APPASAMY (b.1891)

For more than forty years Bishop Aiyadurai Jesudasan Appasamy⁽¹⁾ has been a leading figure in the world of Indian Christian Theology, as well as in the Indian Church, to which he has rendered very distinguished service as writer, teacher, pastor and bishop. He is the author of many books and articles, and has encouraged many other authors to write and publish their works. In the field of theology his name is best known for his powerful and attractive exposition of the Christian mysticism of the Fourth Gospel, that Johannine bhakti margā which he finds to be so closely linked in atmosphere to the bhakti tradition in Hinduism. As Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya used Sankara as his "instrument" towards elaborating an Indian Christian theology, and as Chenchiah turned to Sri Aurobindo, so Appasamy has turned to the personalist tradition of bhakti, and to its philosophical exposition as found in Ramanuja.

Bishop Appasamy was brought up in a Christian home,⁽²⁾ his father, Dewan Bahadur A. S. Appasamy Pillai having been converted from Saivism to Christianity at the age of 24, partly through the influence of the Tamil Christian poet, H. A. Krishna Pillai, who became a revered friend of the family. He grew up in the large town of Palayankottai, fifty miles north of Cape Comorin, and went with his parents to the Anglican Church.

(1) For studies of Appasamy see:

- A.J.Appasamy: My Theological Quest (CISRS, Bangalore, 1964) (ATQ)
- Herwig Wagner: Erstgestalten einer einheimischen Theologie in Südindien. (München, 1963).
- G.C.Oosthuizen: Theological Discussions and Confessional Developments in Churches of Asia and Africa (Franeker, Holland, 1958).
- A.Christian Theological Approach to Hinduism (Gurukul Theological Research Group : CLS, Madras, 1956).

(2) ATQ 1f. See also his father's autobiography - A.S. Appasamy: Fifty Years' Pilgrimage of a Convert (CLS, 1940)

Appasamy often pays tribute to the influence of his father on his understanding of the Christian life. Dewan Bahadur A. S. Appasamy was a man of very wide interests, who as a successful lawyer never gave up his friendly contacts with Hindu acquaintances. He was fully devoted to Christ, and took a leading part in active evangelistic work, especially through the Indian Missionary Society, of which he was the President to the end of his life. He retired early in order to devote himself to Christian literary and evangelistic work, and in the closing twelve years of his life devoted himself more and more to Christian mysticism, as the result of a consuming desire for a vision of God. In this search he received considerable help from a Hindu Guru who instructed him in the practice of yoga. As a result of the practice of this type of meditation (dhyana) his father did experience many visions, and his mind was filled with a deep peace. More and more he became conscious of God as Light. He was greatly attracted by the Johannine descriptions of Christ as Light and Life, and felt that physical light was in some deep way a symbol of the divine Light. When questioned he would reply that "The Light that is God, while akin to the many forms of physical light is yet light in a subtler sense, transcending the limitations of physical light."⁽¹⁾ Bishop Appasamy admits that in his earlier years he could not share all his father's religious thoughts and ideas,⁽²⁾ but his first publication was a pamphlet about his father's theology entitled An Indian Interpretation of Christianity,⁽³⁾ and there is no doubt that his whole approach to the expression of the Christian faith in the Indian setting was influenced by his father's interest in the Fourth Gospel, in the use of Hindu techniques of meditation, and even to some extent in the stress on the illuminative aspects of the Christian way.

(1) ATQ. 7.

(2) ATQ. 7.

(3) CLS, 1923.

While still in his teens A. J. Appasamy had a decisive conversion experience, through the ministry of Mr. R. T. Archibald of the Children's Special Service Mission (CSSM). It is a significant fact that all through his long life his interest in evangelism, and in work for spiritual revival among Christians remained strong, and his interest in Hindu bhakti and in a reinterpretation of Christian theology has not prevented him from working happily and fruitfully with evangelists, both Indian and Western, from a decidedly conservative background. (1)

Appasamy went to College at Tirunelveli, and later Madras, but suffered from ill health at this period, and so found time to begin his literary work, and also developed an interest in Tamil literature, particularly of the Saiva Siddhanta. In 1915 he went to the United States, where he studied theology at the Hartford Theological Seminary in Connecticut, and later continued his studies at Harvard, and then at Oxford. In all he spent seven years studying in America and England.

During this period he became interested in the spread of the Christian faith in the Hellenistic world of the first four centuries, in a situation which seemed to him to have many parallels with that of modern India. A study of men like Justin Martyr, Clement and Origen, convinced him that Christian apologists in India must be well educated men familiar with the literature and culture of the country, and able to use their knowledge of Indian philosophy and religion as a vehicle for the effective presentation of Christian truth. (2) This study began to give a definite shape to his ideas for the work he wished to do on his return to India.

The subject of Appasamy's Oxford doctorate thesis was The Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel in its relation to Hindu Bhakti Literature. His interest in mysticism was growing, and in Europe he came to know many of its distinguished exponents, like

(1) Compare, e.g. his recent biography of the evangelist J. Edwin Orr: Write the Vision, and his booklet A Spiritual Awakening in South India (Evang.Lit. Depot, Calcutta, n.d.) on the spiritual revival in his Diocese of Coimbatore in 1952 and the following years

(2) ATQ. 11, 12.

Baron Von Hugel, Friedrich Heiler and Rudolf Otto. This was a period when in the West interest in mysticism was at a much higher peak than it has been since the Barthian revolution in theology. Writers like these, together with W. R. Inge and Evelyn Underhill made a strong appeal to one who had in his immediate family background the Saivite bhakti tradition as well as the Christian bhakti of Krishna Pillai. His studies led him deep into the Johannine literature, into Western mysticism, especially writers like Eckhart, and into the work of the Tamil devotional poets of both the Saivite and Vaishnavite traditions. He found himself deeply stirred by their firm belief in a personal God, and their intense longing for communion with Him. Here, he felt, was an Indian tradition which had close affinities with Christianity, and could surely be used as an instrument towards the fuller Indian understanding of the faith.

Another event which deeply influenced him was the visit to Oxford in 1920 of Sadhu Sundar Singh. He writes:

"His life of intense prayer, his ceaseless evangelistic work, his utter renunciation, all these laid their spell on me. That contact with him led to a lifelong devotion to him and an increased faith in the Lord he served."⁽¹⁾

Here was a man who, though not a scholar or theologian, was nevertheless a true Indian mystic, one whose burning Christian faith was expressed in a way which Indian people could understand and appreciate. Appasamy came to know him, and collaborated with B. H. Streeter in writing a book on him, The Sadhu.⁽²⁾ He did not fail to notice how, like so many Indians, Sundar Singh was specially attracted to St. John's Gospel, with its teaching of the indwelling Christ.⁽³⁾

After returning to India in 1922 Appasamy continued his Indian studies, turning now to the Sanskrit texts as well as Tamil. His search for a philosophical

(1) ATQ. 13.

(2) Macmillan, 1921. Appasamy later wrote two more books on Sundar Singh: The Cross is Heaven (London, 1956), Sundar Singh: A Biography (London, 1958).

(3) ATQ. 16.

basis for the bhakti tradition which so attracted him led him especially to Ramanuja's classic formulation of a theological system which expresses a deep individual experience of a personal God.⁽¹⁾ We shall see in the sequel how important this study of Ramanuja was to be for Appasamy's own theological expression.

The fruit of all these years of study was seen in the publication of the two books which are perhaps his best and most original, Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study of the Johannine Doctrine of Love⁽²⁾ and What is Moksa? - A Study in the Johannine Doctrine of Life.⁽³⁾ Here we find his fullest exposition of his understanding of the Johannine teaching, illuminated by a wealth of illustration from the Tamil bhakti poets. The Christian life is a life of loving devotion to God in Christ, and the goal of life, that Moksa, or release or salvation for which Hindu and Christian long alike, is to be found in faith-union with Christ. Not absorption in the Divine, but a loving personal union with Him who said "Abide in Me"; that is the chief end of man. This is a theme to which Appasamy remains faithful in all his later writings, and it sounds the typical note of his theology.

These books were followed in 1935 by Christ in the Indian Church,⁽⁴⁾ and in 1942 by The Gospel and India's Heritage⁽⁵⁾ which expounds, in an Indian context, the inner life, public ministry and teaching of Jesus, and so gives us Appasamy's mature reflection on the major doctrines of the Christian faith. The Gospel and India's Heritage is the fullest exposition of his theology which has yet appeared but, partly because it is written in almost text-book style with a view to translation into the different Indian languages, it adds comparatively little that is distinctive to what he had said in the earlier books.

(1) ATQ. 13.

(2) CLS, 1928, cited as ABM.

(3) CLS, 1931, cited as AWM.

(4) SPCK, Madras.

(5) SPCK, London and Madras, cited as AGH.

In his earlier writings Appasamy had spoken of the possibility of using some of the best Hindu bhakti lyrics as vehicles for Christian devotion, and in 1930 he helped to supply the need by publishing Temple Bells,⁽¹⁾ a collection of readings from Hindu religious literature, with a useful introduction. In his later years his scholarly work has continued, with a standard biography of Sadhu Sunder Singh, and a study of the Tamil Christian poet Krishna Pillai.⁽²⁾

From 1932-6 Appasamy was on the staff of Bishop's College, Calcutta,⁽³⁾ and used his time in Calcutta to study the reform movements of modern Hinduism, such as the Brahma Samaj and the Ramakrishna Movement. As we have seen, many of the religious leaders of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had come from Bengal - men like Ram Mohan Roy, Keshub Chunder Sen, the Tagores, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya and Sri Aurobindo. Appasamy himself was partly responsible for giving the impetus to the development of a lively group of Christian theologians in South India, and his period in Calcutta provides a link between his own writings and that of some of the writers whom we have been considering. On later occasions he spent considerable periods at Benares, studying Hinduism in its traditional and modern forms.⁽⁴⁾

Dr. Appasamy served for many years in the Anglican Diocese of Tinnevely, and after the formation of the Church of South India in 1947 he was in 1951 consecrated Bishop in Coimbatore, where he served until his retirement, and where he still lives. Besides books, he has also published many articles in periodicals like the Madras Guardian and the International Review of Missions. He also served as Editor of the very important series of books entitled Indian Studies, published by

(1) YMCA, Calcutta, 1930.

(2) To be published by USCL in World Christian Books series.

(3) An Anglican Theological college.

(4) ATQ, 14.

the Christian Literature Society from 1928 onwards, a series which included his own two books on the Fourth Gospel and also V. Chakkarai's Jesus the Avatar and The Cross and Indian Thought, and C. S. Paul's The Suffering God. There is no doubt about the fact that Indian Christian theology owes a great debt to Bishop Appasamy.

Some Leading Ideas

Before we proceed to a detailed examination of Appasamy's treatment of various doctrines we shall take a brief glance at some of his leading ideas.

1. He writes from a deep personal experience of Christ, and his whole life has been an attempt to live out this experience in devotion and service. He writes:

"It is essential that we should live in complete obedience to our highest and noblest Christian convictions, listening to the inner voice.... Theology is born out of experience; it is not woven from books or sermons. It is our understanding of God as we abide in Him in Dhyana and service, and conform to His will."⁽¹⁾

2. The classic expression of the personal experience of Christ is to be found in the Fourth Gospel, above all in what Appasamy describes as the mahavakya "Abide in Me and I in you."⁽²⁾ The Christian life is above all a life of union with Christ, a union in which the distinct personalities of the bhakta and of the Object of bhakti are preserved

3. Moksa is to be thought of as the state of union with God in Christ, and as a result little stress need be laid on traditional theories of the Atonement. What matters above all is that we should come to know Christ, and should find union with Him. The way of salvation is the way of getting positive love, rather than the more negative way of overcoming sin.

4. God is fundamentally personal, and so there can be no attempt to use Sankara's monistic categories in the interpretation of the Christian faith in India. In the bhakti tradition, however, and in its philosophical exposition by Ramamuja, we find a real affinity with Christian experience, and so a valid

(1) ATQ, 15.

(2) John 15:4. ATQ, 28.

praeparatio evangelii. The bhakti tradition has prepared the hearts of many for the highest fulfilment of union with God in Christ.

5. "There is that of God in every man."⁽¹⁾ God has not left Himself without witness, and is immanent in all men. It is left to us, however, to reveal the indwelling God, so that men may know Him as He is, and truly experience fellowship and union with Him.

6. The long search for God in India is of the greatest positive value, and Christians in India have erred in neglecting the rich religious heritage of Hinduism. While remaining ever faithful to Christ, the Church in India should seek to be truly Indian, and to use everything in the cultural and religious heritage which is worthy of acceptance as an instrument for the glory of God in Christ.

7. India has a rich heritage of mysticism, much richer than that of the West, though the West, too, has the Confessions of Augustine and The Imitation of Christ, as well as the impersonal tradition of Eckhart. India can make a noble contribution to world Christianity by sharing this mystical heritage - envisaged as personal mysticism, not the monism of Sankara - and in future developments the Indian Church will be well advised to encourage and promote this fruitful and promising strain of personal mysticism.

In proceeding now to a more systematic examination of Appasamy's theology we shall depart somewhat from the customary order of treatment of the various doctrines, in order to deal first with his presentation of the Person and Work of Christ, as the whole of his exposition depends upon this.

(1) The phrase comes from George Fox: "Then will you come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every man." (From Epistle from Launceston Jail, 1636: Journal, London, 1827, Vol.I. p.333). cp. R.M.Chetsingh: That of God in Every Man. (Hoshangabad, 1943).

1. The Doctrine of the Person of Christ

(a) "I and the Father are one"

"Who is Jesus Christ?"⁽¹⁾ Appasamy's answer is orthodox, in the sense that he stresses both the humanity and divinity of Christ, defending his historicity against the sentiment of Swami Asheshananda that "to the Hindus the Historicity of Christ is not of much concern."⁽²⁾ He points out how the Fourth Evangelist, by saying that the Word became Flesh, is resisting all tendencies to Docetism:

"The Jesus with whom he had come in contact was no phantom but a real human being.... The body of man is no base thing to be despised. If it has been the medium for revealing the Divine, its capacities are indeed of an infinitely high order."⁽³⁾

At the same time he explicitly avoids any mere "human" Christology:

"What I have written.... must not leave the impression that Jesus was only a man who lived the life of fellowship with God.... This relation of love and obedience and dependence, bringing about a rare joy of fellowship, exists in the depth of the Godhead."⁽⁴⁾

Jesus is, then, fully man and fully God. But what is his relationship to the Father? Is it one of identity of substance? It is in dealing with this question that we find Appasamy producing some of his most important suggestions, and a good point of departure for the discussion is the favourite Johannine text "I and My Father are One."⁽⁵⁾

The traditional theological solution of the problem is that Christ is *ὁμοούσιος*, of the same substance, as the Father. In the Godhead, which is manifested in Three Persons, there is an underlying *οὐσία* or substance. Thus there is in effect a metaphysical unity between the Father and the Son. Christ is one

(1) AGH 26

(2) AGH 263

(3) ABM 139

(4) AWM 67

(5) Joh. 10:30.

with the Father, a priori, as it were, because of the fact that there is a common *oort* underlying both Persons. Appasamy challenges this view, and holds that the union of Father and Son is rather a moral unity: the Son, from all eternity, is so conformed to the Father's will, so perfect in his obedience, that the two Persons are fully one, but in a moral rather than a metaphysical way. This unity may be described as Jesus'

"sense of moral harmony with God.... It was simply the rich, spontaneous and unstinted pouring forth of His personality to God."⁽¹⁾

"As we read the Gospels we do not see a person who realises in glorious moments His oneness with God, but see one who lives in constant and utter dependence upon the Father.... Jesus was one with God in the sense that He continually oriented Himself aright to the Father's thought and will."⁽²⁾

There is a good reason behind Appasamy's attempt here to posit a moral rather than a metaphysical unity between the Son and the Father. He is going straight to the heart of that monist Hindu tendency which we have seen in Ram Mohan Roy and others, the tendency to use the two great Johannine texts "I and my Father are one", and "Abide in Me", to prove that God the Father, Christ, and the believer are finally all one. There are two distinct questions here, that of the nature of the union between the Father and the Son, and that of the nature of the union between Christ and the believer. The monist tendency is to say that in each case the union is a metaphysical one. Christ is one with the Father in substance; the believer attains or realises complete metaphysical unity with Christ. And so ultimately there is neither believer nor Christ, but simply the undifferentiated unity of the Godhead.

Appasamy challenges this view at both levels. The union of the believer with Christ is a moral union, based on love and obedience, and so, too, is the union of the Son with the Father. His argument is in large measure based on an

(1) AWM 3.

(2) AWM 56-57.

exegesis of those passages in the Fourth Gospel which affirm the subordination of the Son to the Father.⁽¹⁾ Writing about John 10:30 "I and my Father are one" he says:

"It may be quite true that on the surface this verse is like the texts in Upanishads which set forth Advaita. But we must remember that Jesus always thought of God as His Father.... This means that the relation between God and Jesus is a personal relation between Father and Son. Jesus also says, 'The Father is greater than I'. This shows that He regards Himself as wholly dependent upon the Father; He is not identical with God.....

We can, therefore, say that 'I and the Father are one' did not refer to any oneness or identity in the real nature of God and Jesus. The relation between God and Jesus was a personal one.... There is no hint in this verse that the nature of God and man is one and the same."⁽²⁾

The relationship, then, between Christ and the Father, is not one of "identity", but rather of a "completeness of harmony... in thought and purpose."⁽³⁾ We see this illustrated vividly in the story of Gethsemane with "the struggle which went on in His soul"⁽⁴⁾ terminating in the union of His own will with that of the Father. "We see here Jesus deliberately conforming to the Father's will."⁽⁵⁾ Monothelitism is ruled out; Jesus, as man, has His own will, but it is completely devoted to that of His Father. "The doing of the Father's will was of the essence of His oneness with the Father."⁽⁶⁾

As we shall see later, Appasamy applies the same argument to the unio mystica, the relation of the believer to Christ. Where Sankara's advaita, as represented today by Dr. Radhakrishnan, would say that ultimately the believer

(1) e.g. John 14:28; 5:19-23; AWM 51.

(2) AGH 35-6.

(3) AWM 59.

(4) AWM 61.

(5) AWM 66.

(6) AGH 37. Cp. J. A. T. Robinson: Honest to God, p.77: "He is perfect man and perfect God... as the embodiment through obedience of 'the beyond in our midst', of the transcendence of love." (My italics)

is one with God - aham Brahma asmi - Appasamy stresses the fact that the union, though real, is moral not metaphysical: it represents the bringing of our wills into conformity and harmony with the mind of Christ.

In fact, for Appasamy the question of the relation of Christ to the Father cannot be divorced from that of his relation to the believer. In John 17:20 Jesus prays, "... That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." This "as" implies, he says, that the two relationships are of the same kind. He writes:

"Some readers of St. John's Gospel understand "I and the Father are one" to mean that by this Christ declares His own Deity and asserts that He is indeed God. The main difficulty in accepting this meaning is that according to the Gospel of St. John the oneness between God and Jesus is like the oneness among the followers of Jesus.... Here the union between God and Christ is said to be the pattern of the union which should prevail among the followers of Christ. If we understand "I and my Father are one" as teaching the Deity of Christ, it is difficult to understand the present passage. Then the followers of Christ would also possess Deity, which is against all Christian doctrine. The followers of Christ are not gods, nor do they possess any claims to Godhead. What this prayer desires is that there should prevail among Christians such a spirit of love and fellowship as exists between Christ and God. This makes it clear that the union between God and Christ which is spoken of in the Fourth Gospel is a union in love and work and not an identity in their essential nature." (1)

On the face of it this passage looks like a denial of the divinity of Christ, but it is clear from many other passages that such is not Appasamy's intention. (2) His exegesis both of John 17:20 and of the "subordination" passages is intended to show that Christ and the Father are not "One" in the Advaita sense. The difference of function is there, and the difference of "person" too, a difference which alone makes possible the "moral" union of personal love within the Trinity which a purely "metaphysical" unity seems to exclude. Like

(1) AGH 38

(2) e.g. AGH 69. "To redeem men from their sin God Himself became incarnate, lived as a man, identified Himself completely with their sorrows and was crucified on the Cross."

the framers of the formula of Chalcedon, Appasamy is here wrestling with terms in an effort to preserve the unity, and yet not to eliminate the diversity, and if his solution is not entirely satisfactory, it can hardly be said that theirs was either - especially for Indian Christians with little knowledge of Greek terminology.

(b) Christ the Logos

With his great love of the Fourth Gospel, Appasamy naturally turns frequently to the idea of the Logos, and seeks to associate this with the Hindu idea of the immanent, indwelling God, the antaryamin. In an exposition of John 1:6-14 he speaks of how men come to Christ, "the awakening of bhakti"⁽¹⁾ as he calls it, or what Reformed Theology would term "effectual calling". The subject of study here is "the pathway to union with God",⁽²⁾ and Appasamy points out that "it is not possible to separate entirely the experience of seeking, from that of reaching, God,"⁽³⁾ for in fact the God whom we seek is already in a sense within us, as what he calls "the Immanent Christ".⁽⁴⁾ So, too, for the Hindu bhakta, God is present both in the external world, and also in the heart of man, as the antaryamin.

The argument here hinges on Appasamy's exegesis of the words, "He was in the world" in John 1:10. Most commentators understand these words to refer to the Incarnate Christ, who came into the world, and so was in it, though the world, rejecting Him, "knew him not". Appasamy, however, interprets the expression as referring to the Immanence of Christ, the Logos, in the world

(1) ABM Chap. II.

(2) ABM 28.

(3) ABM 34.

(4) ABM 34.

before His Incarnation, and quotes in support Ranga-Ramanuja's and even Sankara's commentary on a verse of the Taittiriya-Upanisad,⁽¹⁾ "Having created that, He then entered the same". The meaning of this verse, he says, is that "the Supreme One can be known only in the heart of the world".⁽²⁾ John, then, is stating the immanence of God in the world, while at the same time admitting the need of an incarnation, in order that men may know Him more clearly.

"The Evangelist states that God is present in the world, that is the world of men, so that they may understand Him clearly.... Because men have not understood Him, even though He is immanent in them, He has 'become flesh'. The incarnation is a more effective means of showing God than mere immanence."⁽³⁾

The point is continued in the exegesis of the next verse (v.11) "He came unto his own". For Appasamy these words mean Christ's coming for all men, and not merely to the Jews. Those who are "born of God" are not those who have experienced the "New Birth" but rather all men, as by nature children of God. He therefore sees in the passage three lines of thought:

- "Men in whom the Logos already dwells are exhorted to abide in Him so that He may abide in them;
- those who are His own are expected to receive Him;
- those born of God are given the right to become children of God."⁽⁴⁾

As "the immanent Christ", therefore, God is already present in all men. But men have not yet fully understood Him, and so Christ becomes incarnate as a more effective means of God's self-revelation:⁽⁵⁾

"The immanent Logos is no stranger, of whose real nature we are ignorant, but is One of whom we know much; for in the Jesus of history and experience we behold his unutterable glory."⁽⁶⁾

(1) Tait. Up. 2.6.2.

(2) ABM 41.

(3) ABM 42-3.

(4) ABM 45.

(5) cp. R. Pannikar's idea of "unveiling" the "Hidden Christ" who is already present in Hinduism. v.infra p. 566.

(6) ABM 44.

"Every man, though indwelt by God, has to relate Himself to God... God is in all human souls in the sense that the minimum functioning of man's capacity is dependent on Him. But all men have to attain to a full experience of the indwelling God in the sense that they have to attain to a maximum functioning of this capacity."(1)

(c) The Cosmic Christ

Thus Christ, as the immanent, eternal Logos, is present, though perhaps hidden, in all men by nature. Yet it is not only in the hearts of men that He is to be found pre-existing: He is present in the whole world, for as the Logos He is also the Agent of Creation. So we are brought, while still strictly within the confines of Christology, to a consideration of the relation of God to his creation. As we have seen, this is a critical point for all Indian Christian theologians, because of the immense pressure exercised by the advaita view that ultimately God and the Creation are one.

Briefly, Appasamy comes to the conclusion - on the basis of the Johannine text and with help from Ramanuja's philosophy - that God is not identical with the cosmos, but is rather present and active within it, as Logos, related to it in somewhat the same way as the human soul is to the body. He gives an interesting quotation from the Brihad-Aranyaka Upanisad:

"He who, dwelling in the sky, yet is other than the sky, whom the sky does not know, whose body the sky is, who controls the sky from within - He is your Soul, the Inner Controller,(2) the Immortal....
He who, dwelling in the mind, yet is other than the mind, whom the mind does not know, whose body the mind is, who controls the mind from within - He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal."(3)

Appasamy comments,

"The value of this rather rare passage is great. God is not identified with the world as in so many other passages of Hindu Scriptures but He is distinctly felt and recognised as different from the world which He animates."(4)

(1) ABM 46.

(2) antaryamin.

(3) Br. Ar. Up. 3,7,8-20. cited AWM pp.166-7.

(4) AWM 168.

The philosophical basis for this exposition of God's presence in the world is found in Ramanuja's doctrine that God is present in the world in the same way as the soul is present in the body:

"In some such way but on a magnificent scale there is a Mind or Reason behind the whole world. This Mind, or as the Greek Bible says Logos, or, as the English Bible says, Word, animates the whole world..... It is not identical with the world; it is different from the world; but the world lives because of its functioning.... Underlying all that we see is the operation of this invisible Personal Power."(1)

Jesus, then, the incarnate Logos, is identified with this eternal Mind:

"The Force or Energy that is immanent in the universe guiding it in the moment of creation and continuing to guide it ever since, became flesh and dwelt among men as Jesus.... What we see in the Gospel records is but a glimpse of a tremendous relation stretching back to the very beginnings of time, yea, even when there was no time."(2)

As the eternal Logos, therefore, God is immanent in all natural phenomena, the terrible as well as the beautiful, the dark as well as the bright. But above all He is present in the heart and mind of man. We are reminded of Justin Martyr by the words,

"All through the ages and in every country the eternal Logos has been at work quickening men's hearts and minds."(3)

This Ramanujan analogy of soul and body is of great importance in Appasamy's theology, and we shall find that he uses it in no less than four different contexts, transforming it into a Christological Analogy.

(a) It is first used here, to illustrate the relationship of God to the created world: He is within it, directing and controlling it, and yet not fusing or uniting with it. The world is as it were a body of which God is the soul.(4)

(1) AWM 168-9. ~~pp. 55-56~~

(2) AWM 169.

(3) AWM 172.

(4) cp. "Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment." Psalm 104:2.

(b) In the second place, Appasamy uses the analogy in the true Christological context:

"Thus God took, as it were, a second body, the fleshly organism of Jesus... God revealed Himself to men through the human body of Jesus." (1)

Here the thought is that in the incarnate Christ, the divine is to the human as soul to body. Appasamy does not say in so many words that in Christ the place of the human soul is taken by the Logos, (2) but rather, in simple terms, that in Him the Logos, the Eternal Mind, took a body. When we remember that the normal Indian philosophical explanation of the relationship of Christ to God is to say - following Sankara - that the human and the divine are identical, are metaphysically fused into the divine, we realise that the alternative which Appasamy puts forward, based on Ramamuja's interpretation, is much more helpful, and indeed is very close in meaning to Western formulations of the Christological analogy.

The third and fourth applications of the analogy, to which fuller reference will be made later, are (c) to the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and (d) in his Body, the Church. (3)

It might be thought that a Christology which lays so much emphasis on the eternal, immanent Christ would tend towards Docetism, but Appasamy explicitly denies any such tendency, (4) and often stresses the full humanity of Jesus:

"The human Jesus who walked the land of Galilee is also the eternal Christ, who was before all time and who made all things.... In a historical person named Jesus was found under human conditions the ever present and everywhere present God of whom we have been thinking.... To live fully we must relate ourselves to Him, realising that He was no mere man, but the very Life and Light which energise in the world of nature and of man." (5)

(1) AGH 207.

(2) cp. Keshub Chunder Sen - and Apollinaris!

(3) v.infra p.351.

(4) e.g. AGH 262 where he quotes the anti-docetic teaching of I John 1:1-2, and writes: "God identified Himself entirely with men.... [Christ] was a real human being.... His complete identification with men has brought Him very close to us."

(5) AWM 187.

To sum up this section, then, we find Appasamy basing his exposition of Christology on a number of the great Johannine affirmations, especially:

In the beginning was the Logos.
The Logos was God.
The Logos was in the world.
The Logos came unto his own.
The Logos became flesh.

But these statements demand some sort of explanation. What is the exact relation of the Logos to God the Father? What is his relation to the world? In Christ, the incarnate Logos, what is the relation of the divine to the human? Appasamy does not turn for his explanation to the Greek philosophical categories of the Trinitarian and Christological controversies, with their use of such terms as *οὐρα* and *ἐνδοξα*. He rigidly avoids any use of the advaita of Sankara, such as Brahmabandhab attempted. Nor does he turn to modern western conceptions of personality or Urgrund. Instead he finds a working formula in Ramamuja's "Modified Non-Dualism" (visista advaita), with its analogical treatment of the relation of the Creator to the Creation, the analogy of soul and body. The analogy is linked here with the conception, taken, as we have seen, from the Brihad-Aranyaka Upanisad, of God as present in the Creation as Inner Controller (antaryamin), and this antaryamin Appasamy identifies with the immanent Christ, the eternal Logos, who, though eternally present in the world yet reveals Himself in a special way, for men's salvation, when He takes flesh and is born of Mary in Bethlehem.

(d) Incarnation and Avatara

(i) We see then why it was necessary for the Logos to become flesh. Though He was present in the world and in men, yet for many He remained hidden, and they failed utterly to respond to his presence:

"If the results of the Logos at work in the hearts of all men are so widely different, the reason for them does not lie with the Logos but with the people who have responded to his awakening and the way in which they have responded to it."(1)

(1) AWM 173-4.

Yet God decides to reveal Himself fully, and so the Logos becomes Incarnate in Jesus, and at that point, far beyond all others, God's glory is revealed:

"Every man should strive to put himself in the region where the full blaze of the Logos dwells.... The path of wisdom lies in choosing the region which is so pervaded by Light. Such a fully flooded region is Jesus.... Though the Logos has been quickening men's hearts everywhere in the world He is fully embodied in Jesus."(1)

Here we come very close to the heart of Appasamy's teaching. God is immanent in the world and in man. Men of all faiths have seen the Light, in manifestations bright or dim. But we have a duty to come to the fullest Light of all, and that is seen in Jesus, for in Him alone the Logos fully dwells.

(ii) Can Jesus be called an avatara? We have already seen how Keshub Chunder Sen and Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya rejected this idea, which would, they felt, reduce Christ to the level of one of the many avataras of popular Hinduism, and would at best make Him an avatara of Isvara, the personal God, conceived of as a lower manifestation of the Supreme Brahman. Behind both these thinkers we can perceive the advaita of Sankara.

Appasamy, however, has taken his stand in a different philosophical tradition, that of bhakti and Ramanuja. It is natural, therefore, that he should follow a very different line on this issue,⁽²⁾ and in fact he finds that the term avatara, used with certain safeguards, can helpfully and fruitfully be applied to the Incarnate Christ.

The earliest and best known Hindu teaching on the avatara is that found in the Bhagavadgita, where Krishna says to Arjuna:

(1) AWM 174.

(2) In Hinduism the doctrine of avatara is associated especially with the personalist theism of Vaishnavism. A theologian relating himself to Sankara's philosophy would thus find it very difficult to include the avatara doctrine in his system, as it belongs to a different "cluster" of ideas. cp. Ninian Smart: Reasons and Faiths, Chap.IV. Also S. Kulandran: Grace in Christianity and Hinduism, p.149ff.

"Whenever there is a decline of law, O Arjuna, and an outbreak of lawlessness I incarnate myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of the Law I am born from age to age."⁽¹⁾

Appasamy quotes Ramanuja's comment on this verse:

"The good 'set out to attain me and as my name, work and form are beyond speech and thought, fail to see me and can scarcely live or eat. A moment so spent is like millions of years to them. And their whole body becomes thoroughly enfeebled. To save them, I, therefore, grant them a vision of my form and work, hold converse with them and destroy those who are in opposition to them'".⁽²⁾

For Appasamy the Christian implications of Ramanuja's exegesis are that men cannot by their own searching find out the hidden Christ, and so in his Grace He becomes incarnate, granting men "a vision of his form and work" and holding converse with them. Following this insight Appasamy proceeds to outline a "Christian Doctrine of Avatara"⁽³⁾ with the assertion that "fundamentally the Hindu doctrine of Avatara is akin to the Christian doctrine of Incarnation", and with a reference to the undoubted fact that in most Indian languages the word avatara is commonly used by Christians as the translation of "incarnation". He points out, however, a number of places where a clear distinction must be drawn between Hindu and Christian conceptions.

(a) In Hinduism there are many avatars, and in most of these God is regarded as being only partially present: they are "amsa"avatars"⁽⁴⁾ Only Krishna in the Bhagavadgita is usually regarded as the complete (purna) avatara of Visnu. Obviously such a view is incompatible with the Christian conception of the incarnate Christ.

Appasamy writes:

(1) Gita IV. 7. 8, translated by D.S. Sarma.

(2) Gita Bhagya iv. 8. AGH 255.

(3) AGH 256.

(4) amsa = part, portion. For example, in Rama half of the divine essence became incarnate, and in Laksmana one eighth.

"When we speak of Jesus as an Avatara of God we do not mean that He is an Incarnation of only an Amsa or part of God. We mean that He is an Incarnation of the whole Being of God. As a New Testament writer says: 'the fulness of Godhead dwelt in him bodily.'"(1)

(b) So, too, the purpose of the avatara as described in the Gita is inadequate. Christ has come, not for "the destruction of the wicked", but to save sinners.(2)

(c) Further, the Gita presupposes that God becomes incarnate again and again, as need arises. And indeed classical Hinduism postulates a whole series of avataras, while it is common to refer even to great human leaders and teachers, like Sri Ramakrishna, or Gandhiji, or Sri Aurobindo, as avataras of God. For the Christian, the Incarnation of Christ is once and for all, and is unique:

"We believe that Jesus was the Avatara. God lived on the earth as a man only once and that was as Jesus.... It is our firm Christian belief that among all the great religious figures in the world there is no one except Jesus who could be regarded as an Incarnation of God."(3)

(d) The question of the reality of Christ's incarnation must also be faced, for the avatara of Hinduism is really a theophany rather than an incarnation.(4) The Saiva Siddhanta, for instance, believes that "God only appears in the world to help men. He is not born as a child.... He does not possess a physical body for a period of years and use it as an instrument for the achievement of His purposes."(5) Christianity must avoid all such Docetism if it chooses to use the concept of avatara.

(1) Col. 2:9. AGH 257.

(2) So Sundar Singh, v.supra. p. 257.

(3) AGH 259.

(4) cp. the tradition in Hinduism that when an avatara walks his feet do not touch the ground so that he does not leave footprints.

(5) AGH 262.

So, too, advaita criticises the idea of a unique and full historic Incarnation. "God the Infinite Spirit cannot be thus limited."⁽¹⁾ Appasamy gives a significant quotation from Sri Ramakrishna, illustrating the Hindu failure to accept the importance of the historicity of the Incarnation:

"Whether", Ramakrishna says, 'Christ or Krishna lived or not is immaterial; the people from whose brain the Christ ideal, or Krishna ideal, has emanated, did actually live as Christ or Krishna for the time being.'⁽²⁾

In rejecting this point of view Appasamy stresses both the reality of the created world and the historicity of the Incarnation in Christ. With these qualifications, however, he is prepared to accept the use of the term avatara in connection with Christ. It is, of course, a term which fits into Appasamy's whole theological structure which, on its philosophical side, is related not to Sankara's Monism, but to the personal Theism of bhakti and of Ramanuja.

(e) The Personal and the Impersonal

Despite Appasamy's clear rejection of Sankara's monism, with its impersonal Brahman, as incapable of becoming the basis of a Christian conception of God, he yet feels that "mystic experience sometimes leads to a conception of God which requires the use of impersonal terms."⁽³⁾ Mysticism, including Christian Mysticism, has always had two strands or tendencies, one seeking to describe God as transcending all empirical data, as the Absolute, and the other seeing Him as a "warm, Personal Being", full of love, grace and truth.⁽⁴⁾

Appasamy finds both these tendencies in the Fourth Gospel. His exegesis here appears to be somewhat forced, as he finds traces of the "impersonal" in such

(1) AGH 263.

(2) AGH 263. There is a more than superficial resemblance to Bultmann!

(3) AWM 98.

(4) AWM 101. In recent discussions the term "mysticism" is often limited to the first of these, while the other may be classed as the "numinous" approach to God. e.g. Ninian Smart, passim; R.C. Zaehner passim.

descriptions of Christ as "door", "vine", "light", "way", "truth", "life", and it is pointed out that in the Synoptic Gospels Jesus does not describe Himself in these concrete, impersonal terms.⁽¹⁾ He is perhaps on surer ground when he speaks of the Logos-conception as being "semi-personal."⁽²⁾ He sums up the Johanne teaching as being:

"to emphasise those aspects of Christ which transcend personality as against those aspects which are personal"⁽³⁾

and finds confirmation of the validity of this tendency in the experience of Christian mystics:

"If we examine the declarations of these illuminated souls, we see that often the greatest among them, beginning with a type of religious experience wholly centred on the human Christ and loving intercourse with Him, seem to be led as it were on and in - without ever losing hold on the personal relation or those values which it represents - from divinity realised under human attributes to divinity realised in eternity."⁽⁴⁾

At this point Appasamy seems to be approaching a synthesis between the views of Ramamija and Sankara, perhaps with the uncomfortable feeling, which is so understandable, that for millions in India the conception of God as nirguna Brahman will always rank as higher than that of any kind of personal revelation.⁽⁵⁾ He writes:

"In view of this conflict, the combination offered by St. John of both these ways of conceiving God is well worth our attention.... Christ has revealed God to us. In Him we see the Eternal ... But then we must not suppose that in the historic Christ we see all there is of God. The Incarnation is but a working hypothesis helping and guiding man to reach a knowledge of the Divine and does not exhaust all the infinite grandeur of God."⁽⁶⁾

(1) AWM 99.

(2) AWM 99.

(3) AWM 103.

(4) AWM 106. (my italics). This would seem to be a close approximation to a Christian statement of the passage from realisation of saguna to nirguna Brahman.

(5) Contrast the attempt made by R.C. Zaehner to prove that, even within the Hindu tradition, the personal God may safely be regarded as the higher conception.

(6) AWM 112.

In the Incarnation, then, Christ points us beyond Himself to the infinitude of the God He reveals. He is, says Appasamy, like some towering mountain peak, which ultimately proves to be but part of the foothills of a great range:

"Such a towering peak is Christ. He is the only point visible to us. But there is around Him stretching to immense distances the glory and the mystery of the Godhead. We may not say with dogmatic positiveness that in Christ we have seen all and remain content, but through Him seek to understand something more of the ineffable God".(1)

For Sankara, men are divided into those who are capable of apprehending the Absolute, and those who must be content with a personal God. Christianity cannot tolerate such a dichotomy, and Appasamy feels that even simple believers can, through the Johannine approach, apprehend God as both personal and yet more than personal. He gives the illustration of a telescope which permits us to see stars and worlds which previously were outside our knowledge:

"So through Christ we sweep the heavens and realise the inaccessible depths and distances with all their mystery, stretching to we know not where."(2)

The illustration is a vivid one, though one is left wondering if it would not be more appropriate when used of the Written, rather than of the Living Word of God.

(2) The Work of Christ and the Way of Moksa

It is not easy, in a logical presentation of Appasamy's theology, to separate from one another the doctrines of the work of Christ, of the Spirit, and of Sanctification, any more than it is easy to separate those of God, Creation and the Person of Christ. We shall, therefore, seek to portray the work of Christ as completely interwoven with the understanding of the way of Salvation.

(1) AWM 112, 113. One wonders if this statement can be made to square with what Appasamy has written elsewhere, e.g. "We mean that He is an Incarnation of the whole Being of God", and his quotation there of Col. 2:9. AGH 257, and v. supra p.303.

(2) AWM 116.

(a) What is Moksa?

The words moksa and mukti are in common use among Indian Christians for "salvation." The root meaning of the Sanskrit word is "setting free; liberation; emancipation," and so the words are used in Hinduism for the final release of the soul from recurring transmigration. In practice, however, they are frequently used with a content which is positive, rather than negative, that is, which implies the joy of union with God, rather than the mere negative fact of escape or liberation from karma and samsara.⁽¹⁾ The constant theme of Appasamy's book What is Moksa? is that Christians should use this popular and ancient Hindu term to indicate the distinctively Christian idea of eternal life, that is, the knowledge of God in Christ, and faith-union with Him.

Appasamy finds a clear description of the nature of moksa in the Johannine concept of Eternal Life, and the Christian life, the life of moksa realised here and now, can be described as a life of bhakti - as bhakti marga. Texts like "Abide in Me", and "This is Life Eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" express for him the most positive side of the Christian faith, and so he definitely concentrates on them, though he by no means neglects that side of "salvation" (moksa) which speaks of the release from sin won for us by Christ on the Cross. He writes:

"Any description of the ultimate goal of religion as salvation or deliverance, whatever truth there may be in it, does not bring out all that is highest and noblest in the ultimate experiences of religion. If the goal of religion is regarded as salvation, the question naturally occurs, salvation from what? A negative process of redemption from something, whether it be sin or the world's misery, begins to receive extraordinary emphasis and the stress of the spiritual life begins to be laid on the aspect of elimination. Life, on the other hand, indicates a wealth of organic possibilities of growth and adjustment."⁽²⁾

(1) AWM p.236ff. Appendix on "The Hindu Doctrine of Moksa".

(2) AWM 144.

(b) The Johannine meaning of "knowledge"

Of the three traditional Indian "Ways of Salvation" - jnana marga, bhakti marga and karma marga - Appasamy, unlike Brahmabandhab, invariably chooses bhakti, as we have seen. In the Fourth Gospel, however, he is confronted with the Johannine conception of "knowledge" (gnosis), which is quite different from that of the Greek Gnostics or the Indian janis, and whose use is perfectly reconcilable with an interpretation of Christianity as a form of bhakti. Johannine "knowledge", the knowledge by which and in which we come to know Christ and the Father, is no intellectual affair, the mere removal of ignorance or avidya, but is rather the knowledge by which we know and love our most intimate friends.

"By knowledge is not meant an understanding of the whole field of reality but the intimate knowledge of God's person. The profound need in human life is union between man and God. For this man needs to understand God; he does not need to understand the entire world nor the whole range of existence,"(1) ... "Not Vedic lore, not well-ordered meditation, not asceticism, but love unveils the Divine in all its beauty and wonder."(2)

Knowledge and Love, jnana and bhakti, are then united in the Christian apprehension of moksa, of eternal life in Christ. They are

"but different phases of the same relation; they are different aspects of the same experience. A study of the Johannine writings makes it clear that the great goal of knowledge is eternal life, that is, a life lived in union with Christ.... So also the great goal of love is eternal life.... The Fourth Evangelist is thoroughly aware of the importance and supreme value of knowledge, and yet he prefers to lay all his emphasis on love."(3)

The way of moksa, then, lies through personal knowledge of and growing love for God in Christ. Moksa, says Appasamy, in an interesting definition

"is a continuous contact with Reality, personal, conscious and radiant with joy. It is like the life of Jesus with God. It is not the realisation of identity but the experience of a moral harmony with the holy and righteous Father. It is a personal experience which, however, in its higher reaches transcends the personal. It is a corporate experience, man mingling with his fellow men in order to attain the heights of God's love. It begins even in this life and does not wait for an indefinite future."(4)

(1) ABM 217, Appasamy's book was published in 1928, considerably before Buber's I and Thou became available in English.

(2) ABM 220.

(3) ABM 228.

(4) AWM 6.

(c) The Nature of our Union with God in Christ

We have already seen how Appasamy draws a very close connection between the union of the bhakta with Christ, and that of Christ with the Father. Just as the relation of Jesus to God is

"not one of identity but of fellowship", so "there can be no identity between ourselves and God.... Fellowship with God does not consist in a realisation of our ultimate kinship with God, a kinship which always exists though hidden by mists of illusion and which has only to be made clear to the soul by some rapturous glimpse of Reality. But it is the harmony of the individual soul with the Divine Soul in thought and imagination, in purpose and will, in humble deed and adoring devotion."(1)

When our souls thus come into harmony with God in thought, will and deed we are entering into the fulness of our filial relationship to God, who is our Father just as He is the Father of Christ. The kinship which we already possess with God, because of the fact that He is immanent in the world and in all men, is perfected when it becomes a moral relationship, the relationship of fully conscious love of children for their Father:

"The relationship does not become perfect until a moral relationship is added to it, until men receive Him and by receiving Him obtain the right to become children of God."(2)

Appasamy is anxious to make it clear that the "natural" relationship of man to God is not enough. There must be love and fellowship superimposed, and this indeed is the reason for the Incarnation. And the fellowship must be one of two fully conscious persons, not a mere absorption of the human into the divine:

"It is only in the daily and continuous response of man to God that the fellowship is likely to become complete. Man does not cease to be man on attaining this union with God. Throughout he retains his personality."(3)

(1) AMM 68.

(2) AMM 70.

(3) AMM 73.

Appasamy quotes the Marathi poet Tukaram in support of his insistence on the preservation of separate personalities in our experience of union with God, as against the monism of the advaita tradition, and of medieval European mystics like Tauler, St. John of the Cross, Eckhart, and Suso, who drew their inspiration from the monism of Plotinus. Tukaram writes:

"Cursed be that knowledge which makes me one with Thee.... I am thy servant, thou art my Lord.... Water cannot taste itself nor trees taste their own fruit; the worshipper must be separate, thus alone pleasure arise from distinction."(1)

And in Rabindranath Tagore we find the well-known words:

"What is the use of salvation if it means absorption? I like eating sugar, but I have no wish to become sugar."(2)

Our union with God in Christ, then, is to take the form of "deep unselfish love of the whole man for God,"(3) for "love" is the best translation of bhakti.(4) It is to Christ's commandment, "Abide ye in my love"(5) that we must respond, and because bhakti is personal, this response must include our whole personality, our will, feeling and thought. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love"(6) says Jesus, and so Christian bhakti, unlike many forms of Hindu religion, demands a response of the will, in ethical living.(7) To show our love to Christ, we must accept and live by his new Law of Love. At the same time our emotions also must respond,

(1) AWM 91. Quoted from the Poems of Tukarama, I. 76.

(2) AWM 91. Quoted from E.J. Thompson: R. Tagore - His Life and Work, p.99.

(3) ABM 22.

(4) Bhakti is frequently translated "devotion" or "worship".

(5) John 15:9.

(6) John 15:10.

(7) In a revealing section, Appasamy points out that Christian mysticism, even in its most extreme monistic forms, has always had an acid test, a test which Hindu mysticism has often not accepted, that of "impeccability." Mysticism must not lead to anti-nomianism. If the mystic drives his experience "to the logical conclusion that God alone exists and that as God is incapable of sin he too is incapable of sin, he becomes a heretic. This test is an excellent one, and is badly needed in India." AWM 96.

not in an excess of rapture but rather with the bhakti which Ramanuja compares to a "stream of steady flowing oil."⁽¹⁾ And to resolute action and joy must be added also knowledge:

"Our knowledge is not attained by a course of painful or severe reasoning; it is given to us... The Divine Christ illumines us and pours into our souls floods of light."⁽²⁾

To illustrate this necessity of the full response of man - will, emotions and intellect - to God, Appasamy chooses a key-picture, a "key which will unlock the Johannine thought."⁽³⁾ This is the image of the relationship between a son and his father. The natural, physical relationship is there, just as men are "by nature" sons of God. But this "natural" relationship must be given a moral content. The Son must first learn obedience, the service of the will. Then he discovers love, the response of the emotions. And finally he reaches full knowledge and understanding of his father - the inheritance of the intellect. Then only is he able to enter into a full and perfect relationship with his father, in the response of his whole personality. Appasamy writes:

"The supreme concern of the mystical life is the realisation of God... It is only when we bring to God all we have that we can possibly experience Him to the full, and not when we lose our personality."⁽⁴⁾

"The desire to realise clearly the presence of God"⁽⁵⁾ - that is the goal of the bhakti literature of India. It is linked with the "vision" (darsana) of God, but is not limited to it, and it is far from the advaita "realisation of the identity of the human soul with God."⁽⁶⁾ Followers of the way of advaita expect to reach the state of ecstasy (samadhi),

(1) ABM 63.

(2) ABM 67.

(3) ABM 69.

(4) ABM 80.

(5) AGH 134.

(6) AGH 151.

"in which they lose the sense of their own separate existence and realise themselves as one with the Divine. Such experience is not Christian. The highest bliss of the Christian life consists in communion between the human spirit and the Divine Spirit."(1)

Christian bhaktas, too, may experience a sense of ecstasy, a form of samadhi, but it is a communion where the sense of the personal is preserved, an apprehension of the presence of God which may be described as pratyaksa.⁽²⁾ Many Indian Christian saints have had this experience, and some, like Sundar Singh, have left clear and convincing accounts of its reality and its content.

(d) The Meaning of the Death of Christ

In our discussion of the Work of Christ we have seen so far how Appasamy concentrates more on the "positive" side of a life of faith-union with the living Christ rather than on an exposition of the meaning of the Death of Christ. We must now turn, however, to his exposition of Christ's work on the Cross.

He takes as his point of departure two Johannine texts: "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die it beareth much fruit,"⁽³⁾ and, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself."⁽⁴⁾ The first of these texts is taken to indicate the universal necessity for suffering: in suffering we are more closely united with the suffering Christ. And the second forms the basis for a statement of the "Moral influence" theory of the Atonement: on the Cross

"the supreme power of God's love which forgives and redeems, exerts its irresistible influence."⁽⁵⁾

The Cross, he feels, is not to be thought of "negatively", i.e. as the means or the occasion of forgiveness from sin. It is rather the supreme illustration of

(1) AGH 151.

(2) AGH 138. pratyaksa implies the immediate awareness of the presence of God.

(3) John 12:24.

(4) John 12:32.

(5) ABM 112.

the love of God, which draws men to Him. The most important "moment" of the Way of Salvation is our union with Christ, in which we respond to his love, which is shown in a special degree on the Cross. Appasamy gives the illustrations of a man who sticks through thick and thin to an erring friend who has committed a great crime, working night and day to save him, and of a mother whose love to her child never weakens, despite the child's grave moral lapses. Of the first he writes:

"The one in trouble is deeply impressed with his friend's unselfishness and profound love and responds to it with all eagerness. To this is added the spell of emotion which on such occasions comes mightily over men."(1)

And of the mother:

"When the critical hour arrives and a child is guilty of some grave moral lapse, the mother's heart goes out to the child with an agony which passes expression and which sometimes, though not always, works out by sheer force of sacrifice and suffering a great change in character."(2)

In a somewhat similar vein he speaks of the Cross as a "manifestation" of God's love, which "wins" our love in return:

"The manifestation of God's love became absolutely clear on the Cross. God endured the utmost suffering in order to demonstrate His love for us and to win our love and fellowship in return.... Nowhere but in the Gospels do we read of the suffering and shame which God endures with the purpose of making clear His love to men. Thus the suffering and death of Jesus on the Cross is the culmination of God's manifestation of His love to men."(3)

The first pole of Appasamy's doctrine of the Atonement is, then, the moral influence which the love of God demonstrated upon the Cross of Christ has on the bhakta. The second is the self-identification of the bhakta in Christ's suffering:

"He who would find life in Christ must follow Him altogether. And as His intensest moments were those spent on the Cross, the Christian must identify himself with the suffering Lord and even share in His agony. Only such entire and willing identity with Jesus can lead to life eternal."(4)

(1) ABM 113 (my italics)

(2) ABM 119 (my italics). Compare Sundar Singh's similar illustration (v. supra p.) where there is a strong element of "transaction" as well as influence. 260f.

(3) AGH 207.

(4) ABM 110.

While quoting St. Francis, Julian of Norwich and Thomas a Kempis, Appasamy firmly rejects the efforts of some medieval Western mystics "to enter into close fellowship with Jesus by imposing upon themselves penances and mortifications."⁽¹⁾

"But," he adds, "self-inflicted suffering apart, there is abundant suffering for those who would follow Christ, and every Christian is called upon to pass through it in the spirit of the Master, so that his union with Him may become deeper and fuller."⁽²⁾

Appasamy would probably not welcome the terms ordo salutis or Way of Salvation, since for him Atonement is to be taken in effect in its literal English sense of "at-one-ment", the union of the bhakta with Christ in love. But a clear ordo does emerge in his exposition, and it is worth observing. (a) First comes our attraction to the personality of Christ and his teaching - what might be termed our Call.^(b) This is followed by the experience of mystical union with Him, which then demonstrates itself not only by love towards Him, but also (c) in acts of love and service towards our fellow men. Then, (d) as we follow Him in love and service, we inevitably find ourselves involved in suffering. (e) Finally, through suffering shared with Him and reflecting his love, our union with Him becomes fuller and more complete. He writes:

"Are we drawn to the figure of Christ? Has his teaching laid hold of us? Has the spirit which indwelt Him come to abide in us to lead us in the path of love and service? Then inevitably we shall have to face opposition and trouble as He did.... But this suffering will be turned to joy, for through it our union with Christ will become closer and more intimate."⁽³⁾

Appasamy sees two chief obstacles to the acceptance by Hindus of the Christian view of union with God through fellowship in the suffering of Christ. First of all, there is the crucial question "Can God suffer?" With few exceptions Hindu teachers have held that God is impassible:

(1) ABM 115.

(2) ABM 115.

(3) ABM 121.

"As the sun, the eye of the entire world, is not touched by the eternal impurities seen by the eyes, so the one immanent self of all things is not touched by the sorrow of the world, for He is outside it."(1)

For the Hindu, Brahman is ananda, bliss, and so it is impossible to conceive of Him as suffering, or as sharing in the sufferings of men. The Christian, however, as he sees the Cross of Christ knows that God does suffer: not only so, but He "is touched by our sorrows and responds to our needs."(2)

Secondly, the Hindu doctrine of karma cannot be reconciled with the idea of "redemptive" suffering, for according to it all suffering is the result of evil deeds, in this life or previous ones. Unless the doctrine of karma is radically modified - as it was by Sundar Singh - it is a fatal obstacle to the acceptance of any doctrine of atonement involving suffering, either divine or human.

We see, then, that, while accepting the fact and indeed the necessity of the suffering of Christ, Appasamy sees its "application" to human need in terms of moral influence rather than of any kind of objective "sin-bearing." True, there is a brief treatment of the "Victory" theory of the Atonement:

"The reference to the prince of the world being cast out seems to imply that there is a certain solidarity in the way in which the death of Christ operates against the sin of the world. It is not merely a sin here and a sin there that is cast out but the entire power of evil. So powerful and so tremendous is the efficacy of the death of Christ that the whole mass of evil ceases to be."(3)

We are not told, however, how it is that the death of Christ accomplishes this victory, except that in some unaccountable way it is revealed to us that our sins are forgiven. Our sins

(1) Katha Upanisad 5.11. Quoted ABM 117.

(2) ABM 119 (my italics) In this connection compare C. S. Paul: The Suffering God (CLS, Madras, 1932). v.infra p. 471.

(3) ABM 122.

"accumulate into a terrible burden and oppress the soul by its constantly increasing weight and terror.... But the death of Christ reveals clearly that the sins of the past which terrify us and which form a burden are forgiven by our Father out of His infinite and gracious love and that we are given a new strength to contend with the powers of evil."(1)

How this revelation of forgiveness becomes effective is not clearly indicated.

Passages are quoted such as "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29); "He is the propitiation for our sins" (I John 2:1), but the author does not attempt to analyze their significance.

"What is the sacrifice? To whom is it made? For what purpose? These and other questions have been endlessly debated. The sacrifice on Calvary is the uttermost expression of the love of God.... Through this great sacrifice God has fulfilled Himself and, if we may say so with reverence, has realised to the full the riches of His love."(2)

That is as far as Appasamy goes, for to him the central fact is not the "negative" one of sin-bearing, but the "positive" one of faith-union with Christ, a union which is simply strengthened and given added depth by the revelation of suffering love on the Cross, a love in which we join by our own suffering, thereby deepening our union with Christ.

He finds confirmation for this view of the atonement in his exposition of the discourse on the Bread of Life in John 6. He points out that while the synoptic accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper emphasise the fact that Christ's blood is shed for many unto remission of sins, the Fourth Gospel - which is closer to "Indian Theology" - gives no such information, but concentrates rather on the nature of union with Christ, eternal life, and the way in which that union is maintained. He writes:

"It is wholly concerned with the teaching that the body and blood of Christ become the food and drink of men. With much repetition and considerable (3) emphasis the body and blood of Christ are taught as being the source of Life."

He quotes the teaching of the Taittiriya Upanisad which speaks of God as food:

(1) ABM 124 (my italics).

(2) ABM 125.

(3) ABM 134.

"Food is Brahman; for from food creatures are born; by food the creatures thus born live; and into food they enter and perish."(1)

So, too, he says, the Fourth Gospel stresses the fact that "Christ is the heavenly food of His bhaktas."(2) We can see clearly that Appasamy is more interested in the life of union and communion with Christ than in formulating theories of the precise nature of the Work of Christ on the Cross.

(4) The Cross and Forgiveness

There is a verse of Tukaram's which says:

"I am a mass of sin;
Thou art all purity;
Yet thou must take me as I am
And bear my load for me."(3)

How does God "bear my load for me"? In his earlier books Appasamy seems to be reluctant to face the detailed implications of this question, though he never questions the reality of the experience of forgiveness. In a passage based, though without explicit reference, on Christian's confrontation with the Cross in The Pilgrim's Progress, he writes:

"A traveller sets out towards a great city. On the way he accumulates some burdens or thinks he accumulates them. He is so overpowered by these that he longs to get rid of them... So harassed is he by them that he is anxious to be altogether delivered from their oppressive weight. And the burdens do drop. He is now so filled with joy at this deliverance that he forgets the city for which he started.... To be so obsessed with joy at some spiritual deliverance which has been wrought, some victory over sin which has been won.... is to forget the highest in our absorption with something far less noble. The end of religion is not redemption in any negative sense. It is life, rich, full and abounding."(4)

(1) Taittiriya Up. 3.2 Quoted ABM 132.

(2) ABM 135. The question will be discussed further in our consideration of the Sacraments. v.infra p. 342.

(3) From N. Macnicol, Psalms of the Maratha Saints, p.65. Quoted AGH 125.

(4) AWM 156. cp. Chenchiah's definition of the Christian life as "not just sinlessness but life fullness." v.infra p. 373.

If this is simply an affirmation that in the Christian life justification must be followed by sanctification, it is quite acceptable. But one cannot help gaining the impression that something vital has been avoided by the words, "and the burdens do drop". How and why do they drop? The stress on the "Life in God" seems to have been made at the cost of the Cross of Christ, by which alone that life can be lived. This impression is confirmed by the way in which, in What is Moksa?, Appasamy expounds forgiveness from sin (and deliverance from karma) in the general context of God's love rather than in the particular context of the Cross. He writes:

"The whole Christian gospel of forgiveness is a necessary corrective of the doctrine of retribution.... The law of judgment, great and important as it is, has been transcended by the law of forgiveness. Karma has been overcome by grace, Law has been defeated by love".(1)

We are directed, not towards a justice which demanded, and paid, the ultimate penalty for sin, but towards a more indulgent God:

"In considering the problem of retribution we see that love is more ultimate than justice and that the universe is really governed by love and not by justice... God is full of love and in His dealings with men does not exact the utmost penalty from them but allows them to choose for themselves, the choices which they effect bringing upon them their inevitable consequences. In his goodness He may sometimes ward off these consequences from the penitent soul."(2)

In his later book The Gospel and India's Heritage (1942) Appasamy strikes a more definite note in treating the nature of forgiveness. The law of karma - "the moral law that the wages of sin is death"⁽³⁾ - is upheld by Christ, at the cost of his own life:

"The suffering of Jesus, the incarnate God, throughout His life, with the shameful and miserable death on the Cross at its end shows us what suffering there had to be in God on account of sin.... The Cross is the revelation of the tremendous cost which God has to pay for the redemption of men. It is not as if without any effort on His part He forgives men whatever they

(1) AWM 231, 232.

(2) AWM 234.

(3) AGH 122.

may do. The suffering He has borne for us is beyond our reckoning.... The moral law is not set aside in any sense; where there is sin, there is suffering. The sin of men has brought about the suffering and death of Jesus on the Cross. If God forgave without the Cross, He would be laying aside His own moral law which He has established among men... So the experience of the Cross is absolutely necessary. After the Cross no one can say that God forgives men because it is easy for Him or because He does not care to uphold the law that righteousness should prevail in the world."⁽¹⁾

We find here a statement which comes very close to penal substitution, though no doubt Appasamy would not accept the term. Men sink under the burden of karma, the burden of the fruits of their own sins. But this burden is "shifted from us to God."⁽²⁾

"The teaching of Jesus is that we transfer the weight from our feeble shoulders to God's, as He is willing to bear the greater share of the weight. In His abundant love He has become one of us; He has passed through all our experiences; He knows all our difficulties and problems; He has drunk the cup of human sorrow to its bitter dregs. If He forgives, He pays a tremendous price for it. The moral law, then, is not set aside but it is worked in a new way so that it may bring forth the best possible fruit. That evil karma produces suffering has been demonstrated beyond all doubt on the mount of Calvary, ⁽³⁾ where Christ was crucified; the evil karma of men led to His untold suffering."

"The first condition of forgiveness is repentance."⁽⁴⁾ By this law of karma we are each responsible for all the fruits of our actions. But if we repent, and turn to the One Who has been lifted up, and who draws all men unto Him, we shall share in the fruit of that corn of wheat which is fruitful by dying. He bears our sins, our karma, and so we are set free for a life of union with Him.

(3) Man, Sin and Karma

(a) The Image of God

Man is made in the image of God, but there is no question of any identity between God and man, such as Sankara's advaita affirms:

(1) AGH 124-5.

(2) AGH 125.

(3) AGH 125.

(4) AGH 126.

"Man can never, by even the highest stretch of his spiritual effort, become one with God. There is a real spiritual and moral gulf between God and man. Though man is of the image of God, possessing some of his qualities, he can never rise to complete oneness with Him in His grandeur, majesty, purity and righteousness."(1)

In connection with his belief in the immanence of God, Appasamy holds a view which is in fact an affirmation of the presence of the Imago of God in all men, though at this point he does not use the term. Expounding the phrase "begotten of God" in John 1:13, he writes:

"Being begotten of God is not some mysterious spiritual process, reserved for a chosen few, but is another name, lofty and significant, for the inherent God-given capacity in all men to respond to the Divine will working within them."(2)

Thus the Imago, or "inherent God-given capacity to respond" is present in all men, and each man has full freedom and responsibility to respond and accept Christ, so that this potential unity with God may reach fulfilment.

"Already", he writes, "there is kinship between man and God, and it is on the basis of this kinship that we are called upon to seek further fellowship with God."(3)

By creation and nature we are sons of God, but until we come through Christ to know God, until we enter into the full relationship of sons with their loving Father, we shall not know the full experience of union with God. To the "community of nature must be added a life of moral conformity"(4) that is, a life of full Father-son communion, where we are "conformed to" the pattern of Christ, and live in His love.

(b) Sin and Karma

The average person in India is very clearly aware of his karma, but may well

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- (1) AGH 154.
 - (2) ABM 50.
 - (3) AWM 69f.
 - (4) AWM 72.

have very little feeling of sin. "The problem of getting rid of karma is far more pressing than the problem of getting rid of sin."⁽¹⁾ We must turn briefly to Appasamy's teaching on these two closely interrelated subjects.

In advaita-Hinduism there is very little conception of sin. The bhakti tradition, however, with which Appasamy has such a close affinity, has produced some moving confessions, such as that of Dadudayal:⁽²⁾

"Before Thee I am guilty in every nerve and vein; a sinner am I every moment: Master, forgive me!
...Not a single good deed have I done; no virtue is there in me;
no merit is mine:
Yet forsake not Thy sinful child, for without Thee where is my refuge?
Desire, pride, anger and falsehood have misled me since my birth:
O miserable man that I am!
Thou only art my help: Father, wash me with the nectar of Thy rich forgiveness and heal the mind that is sore."⁽³⁾

Such deep expressions of sin are, however, comparatively rare, and one feels that Appasamy himself is reluctant to commit himself to the kind of positive teaching on the deadly and active power of sin which is so clear in the Old Testament, and in Western Christendom. He mentions a missionary friend who had repeatedly, but without success, tried to convince his Hindu hearers of the sinfulness of sin:

"My own conviction," writes Appasamy, "is that the more effective way would be to begin with God and not with man. The Hindu has a real passion for God... He should be first helped to understand the wonder and the depth of God's love, particularly as revealed on Calvary."⁽⁴⁾

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- (1) AGH 97. For a good exposition of this problem, see A.G.Hogg: The Christian Message to the Hindu (London, 1947) Chap.V.
- (2) Dadudayal, 1601-1660, was born in Ahmedabad, a Gujarati Brahman by caste. For him mythology, incarnations and polytheism were futile, and he wrote lyrics of pure bhakti. (Temple Bells, p.4.)
- (3) AGH 96, quoted from Appasamy, Temple Bells, p.62.
- (4) AGH 98.

There is little indication of sin as an active power. Following the Fourth Gospel, he points out that

"Men are of two classes, those who follow light and those who follow darkness. The fact that God illumines the world, does not make all men good and noble... Darkness is man's refusal to accept this profound stirring of the human soul by the divine."(1)

Sin is thus man's refusal to accept the light of the immanent God. It is "due to man's own ignorance, sloth or actual wilfulness... He chooses to walk along the easy path."(2)

There is a certain reluctance here to admit the positive power of sin, or the possibility that there may be behind it a personal power of evil. Anything approximating to a dualism of good and evil is rejected:

"There are in the world tendencies towards evil which are strong and mighty... They are not inspired by the Spirit; they are the work of the flesh.(3) There are clearly marked impulses, powerful and urgent, which come not from God but from the world."(4)

A similar reluctance to admit the power, or the personality of evil can be seen in Appasamy's treatment of the Temptation of Jesus,(5) where Satan is not mentioned, and the temptations are said to have sprung to life from the depth of Jesus' heart:

"He too felt inclined to doubt, and follow promptings of an unworthy nature which made themselves strongly felt."(6)

Appasamy finds the key to his linking of the doctrines of sin and of karma in the Johannine text, "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already."(7)

(1) AWM 179.

(2) AWM 179.

(3) This sentence reflects the very prevalent Hindu idea that the root of all sin is in the body and its passions (kāma)

(4) AWM 180.

(5) AWM 61ff.

(6) AWM 64.

(7) John 3: 17-18, (my italics)

The thought of everlasting punishment repels him, and is, he thinks, contrary to the Johannine emphasis on life and love. Those who believe on Jesus, who find union with Him, are freed from their karma, which He takes on Himself. And those who reject Christ continue to be subject to the law of karma, which is all the time judging them and awarding them the consequences of their deeds.

"There is a perpetual retributive judgment going on even now. Men are judging themselves by their good or bad choices." (1) "There is a moral law in the world in virtue of which a constant judgment is going on. Good deeds inevitably bear their fruit and bad deeds inevitably produce their results. All that men do is impressed for ever on human life.... In this sense there is a continual karma working itself out in human lives." (2)

In this Christian presentation of the doctrine of karma Appasamy acknowledges his debt to Sundar Singh, whom he quotes, (3) and like him he rejects the idea of transmigration or samsara, which for Hindus is invariably a corollary of karma. We are responsible only for the sins of this present life, and do not suffer for sins which some other person may have committed while our soul was incarnated in their body.

India longs passionately for deliverance from karma, and Appasamy, accepting what is true and profound in the doctrine, is eager to give the assurance that, to those who come to Christ in repentance, trusting only in Him, forgiveness is given, and with it freedom from karma. He quotes some moving lines from Kabir: (4)

"I was in immobile and mobile creatures, in worms and in moths;
I passed through many births of various kinds.
In this I occupied many bodies;
But when, O God, I assumed human birth,
I was a Jogi, a Jati, a penitent, a Brahmachari; (5)
Sometimes a king, an emperor and sometimes a beggar,
Saith Kabir, 'O God, have mercy on us;
We have grown weary; make us now whole.'" (6)

(1) AWM 218 (my italics)

(2) AWM 220. Contrast the view of Goreh on eternal punishment. v. supra p.

(3) v. supra pp. 254, 270.

(4) The religious reformer Kabir lived in the fourteenth century, and may have been a Muslim by birth. He became a disciple of Ramananda, who brought Ramanuja's bhakti to Northern India. He worked for Hindu-Muslim unity, and still has many followers today. Temple Bells, p. 5.

(5) jogi = yogi : jati = mendicant : brahmachari = celibate student.

(6) Tr. M.A. Macauliffe. Quoted in AGH 119.

For Appasamy, the description of Christianity as bhakti marga is the description of that wholeness.

(4) The Doctrine of God

It is a significant fact that Appasamy has comparatively little to say about God-in-Himself. Unlike Sen or Brahmabandhab who thought of God as the Supreme Brahman, and so devoted much thought to the Creation and the Trinity, Appasamy's whole approach is that of a bhakta, the object of whose devotion is Christ. The "shape" of our theological treatment has already made this fact clear, and under our discussion of the Person and Work of Christ, we have included much that would usually appear under the Doctrine of God, of Creation or of the Holy Spirit. In the present section we shall attempt briefly to bring together some of his leading ideas on the doctrine of God, but it will be seen that much of this has already been touched upon in our treatment of Christology.

(a) God is Immanent

We have already seen how Appasamy regards God as immanent both in the world and in men.⁽¹⁾ The distinction between the Father and Son is not easy to make here, perhaps on the principle that opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa. God, as the hidden, immanent Logos, is present in the world which He has made, but because men do not see or receive Him, He has to become flesh. Faced with the question whether the immanent God is present in sinners just as much as in saints,⁽²⁾ he posits a doctrine of "degrees" of divine immanence:

(1) v. supra pp. 295 ff.

(2) A question which Hinduism answers in the affirmative. op. Sri Ramakrishna: "Verily I say unto you, the Lord walketh the earth in all forms, and He abideth in the holy and pure man, and also in the man of vice; and He is in the rogue, and in the debauches also He is." Quoted AWM 175.

"In the saint the God within is allowed to function at His highest, that is, the highest possible for that individual soul, and in the sinner the God within is allowed to function only at His lowest."(1)

This indwelling, immanent God is sometimes apprehended as the Logos, as the antaryamin or Inner Controller, and as the Holy Spirit. No very clear lines of distinction are drawn. Stress is laid, for instance, on the Johannine text, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth"(2) and teaching of similar import on "the indwelling Spirit of God" is identified in the Synoptic Gospels.(3)

Yet the same God who is immanent as Spirit and Logos is also infinitely great and holy. "According to all the tests of human reason, the belief in an infinitely great God, exalted far above humanity, is a bed-rock fact."(4)

This holy God must be approached with awe(5) and this will infuse the Christian's bhakti with a deep sense of reverence:(6)

"The idea which Jesus had of God was that of a righteous God, possessed of majesty, power and grandeur,"(7)

and this "otherness" rules out any possibility of there being any identity between God and man:(8)

"Though man is of the image of God, possessing some of His qualities, he can never rise to complete oneness with Him in His grandeur, majesty, purity and righteousness."(9)

(1) AWM 176.

(2) John 4:24. cp. ABM 152; AGH 79.

(3) AGH 81.

(4) AWM 54.

(5) A chapter on "The Sense of Awe" in ABM probably reflects the author's friendship with Rudolf Otto.

(6) ABM 199.

(7) AGH 154.

(8) AGH 154.

(9) AGH 154.

(b) God is Father

In the Fourth Gospel Jesus frequently speaks of God as Father, and for Appasamy this is a key-concept. "The supreme conception of God in the Gospels is that of His Fatherhood," he writes.⁽¹⁾ The idea of God as a personal, loving Father, the Father of Christ but also our Father, is for him more important than the idea of God as Creator.⁽²⁾ God is the Father who loves us, takes care of us, answers our prayers, forgives our sins, reveals Himself to us, and judges us.⁽³⁾ And yet He is more than any human father, and every human analogy breaks down when applied to Him.⁽⁴⁾

It is just such an idea of a personal, loving God which is largely lacking in Hinduism. The doctrine of karma holds men in the bondage of fear, and from that bondage only belief in a loving God can release them:

"When men hold firmly to the doctrine of a loving God, as manifested in the life of Jesus and especially in His death on the Cross, no such fear as many devout Hindus have about the doctrines of karma will remain."⁽⁵⁾

Then, again, for many Hindus God is wholly impersonal, the nirguna Brahman of Sankara, above feeling and action, and so not involved in karma and samsara. It is only here and there in the personal literature of bhakti that God is referred to as Father, above all in the Bhagavadgita when Arjuna addresses the transfigured Krishna as Father:

"Thou art the Father of the world⁽⁶⁾
Bear with me, as a father with a son."

For Appasamy the conception of God as Father, and so as fully personal, is of vital importance, and so he is anxious to establish the superiority of the personalist tradition of bhakti and of Ramanuja as against the impersonal advaita tradition.

(1) AGH 67.

(2) AGH 62.

(3) AGH 63.

(4) AGH 64.

(5) AGH 65.

(6) Gita x. 43,44. trans. D.S. Sarma. AGH 68.

Can God be spoken of as Mother? Hinduism, as we have seen, frequently uses this conception,⁽¹⁾ and Appasamy faces the question of whether or not some such terminology can be used in the Christian tradition. He finds little to support it in the Bible, apart from an isolated text in Isaiah, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you" (Is. 66:13), and draws attention to the Roman Catholic tendency to give divine honours to Mary.⁽²⁾ Nevertheless his conclusion is that

"as Christianity becomes naturalised in India the idea of God as Mother will find a rapid entrance into Christian thought, as it is so deeply rooted in the soil of India. It is a beautiful way of thinking of the tender, devoted and unselfish love of God."⁽³⁾

One may be pardoned for disagreeing with this verdict, while accepting nevertheless that in some of the Christian bhakti lyrics God may legitimately - by poetic licence as it were - be spoken of as "Father and Mother" or even as "Mother" in much the same sense as that intended in Isaiah.

(c) God Suffers

We have already seen⁽⁴⁾ in our discussion of the Death of Christ that Hinduism finds it almost impossible to accept the idea of a suffering God. For Christianity, however, this is a central conception. Appasamy makes it quite clear that it is in fact God Himself who suffers in Christ, not in any Patripassian sense, but because

"God took, as it were, a body, the fleshly organism of Jesus... God revealed Himself to man through the human body of Jesus... Nowhere but in the Gospels do we read of the suffering and shame which God endures with the purpose of making clear His love to men."⁽⁵⁾

(1) e.g. re Aditi in Rig-Veda, and in the popular cult of Kali. We have also seen the idea used in the bhakti of Tukaram (supra p.25¹), and in the Christian devotional writing of N.V. Tilak (supra p.55) and of Sundar Singh (supra p.25¹).

(2) Compare the proclamation by Pope Paul VI of Mary as "Queen of India," at the Bombay Eucharistic Congress, 1963.

(3) AGH 73.

(4) v. supra pp. 314 ff. cp. C.S. Paul: The Suffering God passim.

(5) AGH 207.

For Christianity, the highest conception of God is not nirguna Brahman, but God suffering in Christ on the Cross.

(d) God is Creator

Appasamy says comparatively little about God as Creator for, as we have seen, he is more interested in the Fatherhood and the personality of God than in his creative activity. In considering his teaching on Christ as the immanent Logos we have already noticed his exposition of the sentence from the Taittiriya Upanisad, "Having created that, He then entered the same,"⁽¹⁾ in connection with John 1:10, "He was in the world." It is clear from what he says that he understands that God created the world - inanimate and animate nature - and that God has "entered" and so indwells the world which He has made.

We have seen, further, how, following Ramanuja, he regards the world as being related to God in the same way that body is to soul: God is the immanent force which sustains the world, and keeps all things living and inanimate in being.

(e) Beyond Personality

Appasamy has clearly shown that he regards God as fully personal, the Father who loves and suffers for the children of his love. We need only refer here to what has been said above⁽²⁾ about his belief that in the last resort God cannot be confined to the Personal: He may far exceed all our categories of personal and impersonal. In Christ we see as much of God as it is possible for humans to see, but we do not know what vast further ranges lie hidden beyond.

(5) The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

We have already noted that in Appasamy's theology it is not easy to distinguish the separate "works" of the three Persons of the Trinity. Already in dealing with

(1) v.supra p. 296.

(2) v.supra p. 304.

Christology and with the doctrine of God we have considered the ideas of God's immanence, and of the "Inner Controller" or antaryamin. So, too, in attempting to isolate what he says about the nature and work of the Holy Spirit we are conscious of two facts which clearly influence him - the Johannine description of God as Spirit,⁽¹⁾ and the fact that in Hinduism God is often referred to as the atman or soul.⁽²⁾

We find, then, that in effect Appasamy identifies the Spirit with the "Indwelling God", the "Inner Controller", the antaryamin. He gives a typical quotation from the Hindu Sastras:

"Thou art the Soul of all, the Lord of all, the Indweller of all beings. What then shall I speak unto Thee who art seated in my heart, and knowest my inmost thoughts?

"O Thou, the Soul of all beings, the Sovereign Lord of all creation, the Source of all that exists, Thou knowest all creatures as well as their desires."⁽³⁾

Again he refers to Ramamuja's commentary on the Bhagavadgita, in which he describes God as the Soul and the world as his body.⁽⁴⁾ Appasamy feels that, although there are dangers in this doctrine of the Indwelling God, at heart it is essentially sound, and coincides with the Christian idea that God is Spirit.

"God is very close to us. He is not an inaccessible, far-off Being, dwelling in remote heavens. His Presence is everywhere; as Spirit He pervades the whole universe.... Not a moment passes but His presence envelopes us like the air we live in If we go in search of Him, only outside of ourselves, it will be but wasted labour."⁽⁵⁾

The Johannine teaching on the Comforter⁽⁶⁾ is mentioned, but surprisingly little is said about the "coming" of the Paraclete: it seems to be assumed rather

(1) John 4:24.

(2) or Paramatman = Supreme Soul.

(3) AGH 74. Quoted from the Visnu Purana i.12 (about AD 400).

(4) AGH 75. Ramamuja; Gita Bhasya x.20.

(5) AGH 76. Appasamy refers to such passages as Psalm 139:7-10, Jonah 1:1-4; and Isaiah 57:15.

(6) e.g. John 16:7-14.

that the Indwelling Spirit is always there and available. Appasamy asks why Jesus spoke "as if" the Spirit were coming for the first time into the hearts of men, when He "believed that the Spirit of God had been always active in the hearts of the prophets of His own race."⁽¹⁾ He answers the question by asserting that it will not be so much a new advent of the Spirit as "a new function", namely that of making clear to men's hearts the meaning of the Incarnation.

"On account of this most important new function of the Holy Spirit, Jesus speaks of His coming into the hearts of men as if it were an absolutely new event."⁽²⁾

We greatly miss here a treatment of the newness of the fact of the Spirit's coming, and indeed it is very surprising, even when we make full allowance for Appasamy's devotion to the Johannine teaching, that in this full-scale treatment of the Holy Spirit no account of exegesis is given of the events of Pentecost as described in Acts.

Appasamy describes the work of the Holy Spirit as covering "Inspiration", under which is included divine guidance, the inspiration of Scripture, and the working of the Spirit in the preparation for Christ not only in Israel but also in other religions.⁽³⁾ The work of the Spirit is seen also in "Sanctification", which includes the conviction of sin and encouragement to repentance, the teaching of righteousness, and the work of judgment upon evil in individuals and society. And finally the Spirit is described as the source of endless Joy (ananda).⁽⁴⁾ Appasamy feels strongly that the joy of the Christian life - and of theology! - should receive far more emphasis than it usually does from Western theologians.⁽⁵⁾

(1) AGH 92.

(2) AGH 93.

(3) AGH 82.

(4) AGH 81-88.

(5) Letter to the present writer dated 13.12.1965. Indian theologians have perhaps failed to appreciate Barth's joy! cp. T.F.Terrance: Karl Barth: an Introduction to his Early Theology 1910-1931, (London, 1962) p.23ff.

All these activities, then, are the work of the Indwelling Spirit, the antaryamin, who "is present everywhere and at all times."⁽¹⁾ But why is it that everyone does not feel this universal presence? What are the conditions for "realising the Indwelling God"?⁽²⁾ Appasamy replies in a parable:

"At this moment outside my room there is plenty of fresh, clean air. But unless I open the doors and the windows this air will not come in. Though the Spirit of God is present everywhere, there are certain conditions which we must observe if we are to feel his presence and be helped by it. We must throw open the doors and windows of our soul to Him."⁽³⁾

It will be seen that in the main passage where Appasamy gives his considered views on the Holy Spirit,⁽⁴⁾ no very clear distinction is made between the Spirit and the other Persons of the Trinity, and the general tendency is to interpret the Spirit simply as God in his aspect of Indweller or antaryamin. As a result we feel that there is something missing - that Pentecostal element of newness and power which entered the Church on the first Whit Sunday.

In more recent years, and partly as a result of his experiences in the pastoral ministry and the active work of evangelism, Dr. Appasamy has written in a much more positive vein about the coming, the reception, and the activity of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps he had in mind his earlier theological treatment of the subject when in 1964 he penned the following moving words:

"The need for the Holy Spirit to change whole communities with His new life has become very clear to me after my pastoral work. I have an impression that if I write any theological books now, I would emphasise the essentials clearly and they would be different from books written in the peace of my study. The difficulties as well as the blessings of the pastoral ministry have opened my eyes to a new vision of Christ and of His infinite power."

(1) AGH 88.

(2) AGH 88. It is significant that the word used is "realise" rather than "receive"

(3) AGH 88.

(4) The Gospel and India's Heritage, Chap.V. (published in 1942).

(5) Article, "Christian Theology in the Indian Church" in S. India Churchman, April, 1964.

This positive attitude to the "newness" of Pentecost is given clear expression in a number of sermons, preached between 1953 and 1955 at a time of great revival in Bishop Appasamy's Diocese of Coimbatore in the Church of South India.⁽¹⁾ He writes, for instance:

The Spirit "dwells in our inmost hearts, cleanses us from evil and directs our ways. But at certain times God, the Holy Spirit, comes into the lives not only of individuals but of whole communities."⁽²⁾

And in describing the Day of Pentecost he points out how, in the development of the Early Church, it was necessary to have the "extraordinary experience" of the gift of the Spirit as well as the "steady following" of apostolic doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer.⁽³⁾

(6) The Sources of Authority (Pramānas) and the Doctrine of Scripture

(a) The Pramānas

Dr. Appasamy has recently been writing on the subject of the Sources of Authority in the Christian faith,⁽⁴⁾ and refers to his father's use in a Christian context, of the three traditional "standards" or pramanas of Hinduism - sruti⁽⁵⁾ (scripture), yukti (Reason) and anubhava (Experience). In Hindu religious discussion on any point it has been customary to proceed through these three steps, first of all asking what the inspired Scriptures have to say on the point; then applying to it the canons of reason, to see if it will bear rational argument; and finally testing it against one's own experience, to ascertain if it has the ring of truth in practice.

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- (1) (a) "An Outpouring of the Holy Spirit" (n.d. but c. 1953).
(b) The Pentecostal Element in the Christian Church (1955) (Church of S.India).
(2) "An Outpouring of the Holy Spirit", p.10, (my italics)
(3) The Pentecostal Element, p.8.
(4) The writer has been privileged to see in typescript a chapter, entitled What are Pramānas?
(5) Sruti literally means "hearing", and so refers to the Vedas, which are supposed to have been "heard" directly from God by the seers. The word comes derivatively to mean "revelation", or to refer to Scriptures which are divinely inspired rather than simply "remembered" by men (smṛti). v.infra p.631.

The question which gives rise to Appasamy's study is one put by Chenchish: "Can we have direct, unmediated knowledge of Jesus, or must such knowledge always come to us mediated by Scripture and Church tradition?" The query is an important one, and leads Appasamy to affirm that "the primary task of Christian theology in India is to settle the sources of our authority."⁽¹⁾

(i) Sruti

Appasamy unhesitatingly gives first place to Scripture:

"It is the standard of our faith. It is the first and foremost Pramana, the highest court of appeal for everyone."⁽²⁾

For him the primary revelation comes in the Gospels. The "interpretation" offered by Jesus' followers, especially St. Paul and St. John is also fundamental, "though not necessarily of the same importance as the life and teaching of Christ."⁽³⁾ The Old Testament also is "of value for us as giving us the background in which the historical Incarnation took place."⁽⁴⁾ In an attractive picture he writes:

"Sanskrit books speak of a shining light on the threshold of a house which sheds its rays on either side. The life and death and teaching of Christ is such a light illumining the long historical processes of revelation both before and after Him. In the light which radiates from Him we see what is valuable and worthwhile in the intuitions of sages and prophets both before Him and after Him."⁽⁵⁾

This is a good illustration of the Christocentricity of Appasamy's thought. Christ is the centre of Scripture, and it is in His light that we read both Old and New Testaments, and because all Scripture bears witness to Him the Bible is our primary "Rule of Faith" or premana.

(1) MS p.17.

(2) *ibid.* p.5.

(3) *ibid.* p.6.

(4) *ibid.* p.6.

(5) *ibid.* p.6.

(ii) Yukti

The word "yukti" means "argument", "inference", or "reason". In the context of the pramanas Appasamy's meaning is that every theological belief derived from Scripture should be tested by reason. This is not, of course, a plea for natural theology, but rather for the use of scientific method and argument to prove that theological statements are not illogical or contradictory, but are such as can be accepted by honest, "modern" men.⁽¹⁾ The Christian faith, though grounded in Revelation through Scripture (gruti in both senses), must be capable of being defended at the bar of logical examination, whether by modern secular man or by traditional Hinduism.

(iii) Anubhava

We can accept a belief as our own only when we have proved it true in our own experience. Appasamy, with the memories of his own father and of Sundar Singh fresh in his mind, and with his own deep spiritual experience, gladly accepts the traditional pramana of anubhava or personal experience as one which must be applied to all theological statements. Only those who know God are qualified to speak of Him.

(iv) Sabha

To the three traditional Hindu pramanas Appasamy adds a fourth - sabha⁽²⁾ or the Church, by which he means the authoritative teaching of the Church; and in arranging his four pramanas he would give it second place, immediately after Scripture, and before Reason and Experience. He writes:

(1) Compare, e.g. the type of criticism of traditional theological statements made by such writers as Ninian Smart: Reasons and Faiths, or Paul Van Buren: The Secular Meaning of the Gospel, (London, 1965).

(2) Sabha = meeting, assembly.

"In the creeds, which we are taught to say from childhood, we recite our belief as taught in the Church.... Without a recognition of God's presence in the Church, Christian thought and experience is woefully incomplete. It is of the essence of the Christian religion that God reveals Himself not merely to individuals but to His Church. The Hindu religion fails disastrously in this respect. It recognizes fully God's dealings with individuals; but it does not make clear God's Presence in His believers, as a group or collectively."(1)

Appasamy thus gives a place of decisive importance to "Church Dogmatics", second only to Scripture, which controls it, and exercising authority over the tendencies of individuals to follow their own ideas.

(b) The Doctrine of Scripture

(i) Witness to Revelation

We find a more detailed treatment of the doctrine of Scripture in Christianity as Bhakti Marga⁽²⁾ where, from orthodox beginnings, we find ourselves led to some rather unorthodox conclusions. Appasamy begins with the text "The Father which hath sent me hath borne witness of me" (John 5:37), and goes on to discuss the nature of that witness. The Christian revelation is primarily the revelation through Scripture:

"The witness of the Father is not so much in any direct and immediate revelation which He gives from time to time as in the historic revelation which has been embodied in the Scriptures."(3)

The chief importance of the Bible is that in it we come face to face with Christ:

"The fundamental import of the Christian Scriptures is that they record the story of Jesus. They enable us to get in touch with the historic manifestation of the Divine."(4)

The Bible has no intrinsic "life" in itself, but rather bears witness to the historic revelation of God in Christ:

(1) MS p.12.

(2) Chapter VII.

(3) ABM 155.

(4) ABM 156.

"The Scriptures themselves do not possess life. It is folly to think that there is some inherent power in them to give us life. Their most important function is to lead us to the manifestation of the Divine in time."(1)

(ii) The Old Testament and the Hindu Sastras

Unlike Chenchiah, Appasamy gladly accepts the Old Testament, and shows no tendency towards Marcionism. The Old Testament is not to be rejected or replaced by the Hindu Scriptures. Rather,

"Fresh light will be thrown by them [i.e. the Hindu Scriptures] on different parts of the Bible. New emphasis on different truths of the Christian religion may be suggested by them. But they will not take the place of the Old Testament. In a word, they will supplement, not supplant the Old Testament."(2)

He regards the Hindu Sastras as a useful and God-given praeparatio evangelii for the people of India, and writes:

"In India also there have been prophets and teachers who have prepared the way for Christ, not in the sense that anything they have written refers prophetically to any particular word or deed of His, but in the sense that they have trained the people in noble ways of living and taught them by word and example receptiveness to the ministry of Jesus.... An Indian Bhakta cannot but recognise in Jesus a perfect example of Bhakti."(3)

In words which are reminiscent of Farquhar's "Crown of Hinduism" type of approach he writes:

"There are elements in the ancient Scriptures of India which have to be fearlessly given up. But there are also many doctrines and ideals in them which have to be as zealously assimilated and carried on to their natural culmination in Christ. If Jesus blamed his contemporaries for not listening to the voice of Moses, with equal power and vehemence will he condemn us for not listening to Ramanuja, Manikkavacakar, Tukaram, Kabir and Chaitanya who have left behind them teaching of such undying value, pointing the way to Christ." (4)

It was in pursuit of this ideal of "assimilation" that Appasamy published in 1930 Temple Bells, (5) a selection of readings from Hindu religious literature, one

(1) ABM 161.

(2) ABM 166. See also AGH 77.

(3) ABM 163.

(4) ABM 166.

(5) YMCA, Calcutta. 1st Ed. 1930. 2nd Edn. (n.d., about 1963).

of the best anthologies of its kind ever published, and a veritable treasury of some of the best Hindu bhakti lyrics in English translation.

(iii) The Spirit in Scripture

The Spirit has inspired and guided the writing of Scripture, and comes to our aid in understanding and interpreting it, but Appasamy warns against a too rigorous devotion to the mere letter of the Scripture, and is anxious also to ensure that the way should be open for new revelations. He writes:

"The Scriptures have an important function in that they prepare the heart to love God wholly. But to suppose that they form an irrevocable standard of morals and religion which holds true for all time and for all men whatever might happen is to go too far. The letter kills but the Spirit quickens. It is then the Spirit of the Scriptures which we should seek with all eagerness to understand and practise and not the letter. To follow the letter of the Scriptures at any cost is to go into slavery."⁽¹⁾

What, then, is the meaning of John 16.13, where Jesus says that the Spirit "shall guide you into all truth"? Is new truth to be revealed in future? Are there to be further revelations, or are we to be limited to the exposition of the Scriptures we already possess? He writes:

"If they are absolutely new truths, what reason have we to suppose that they may not supersede some of those which have already been embodied in the Scriptures? We must not be limited by the past, but inspired and guided by it to realms of infinite grandeur. The Holy Spirit, with whom we may directly commune, not only interprets the ancient Scriptures but leads us to unexplored realms of thought, enabling us to deal with new problems in new ways and opening up vistas of endless beauty." (2) "We should study the Scriptures with the greatest care and diligence but should also be prepared to listen to the voice of the Spirit of God as He beckons us to follow Him through unknown paths into new realms of understanding and practice." (3)

We are left asking, "What is to be the criterion of such new revelation? Is it simply the testimonium internum Spiritus sancti?"

(1) ABM 168. *introd.* 1950. 2nd Ed. (n.d., about 1953).

It is perhaps necessary to remark that in some places Appasamy's own exegesis of Scriptural passages is very forced. Examples will be found, e.g. in ABM 45 (on John 1.11, "He came unto his own"); AWM 72 (on John 1.13, "begotten... of God"); AGH 78 (on Is. 57.15, "I dwell... with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" - interpreted as though it were "in him..." i.e. in terms of God's immanence.).

(2) ABM 169.

(3) ABM 171.

(7) The Doctrine of the Church

Of all the Indian theologians whose work we have so far studied, Appasamy's view of the Church is one of the most positive, and we must remember that he has a long career of distinguished service to the Church behind him, service as writer, pastor, theologian, evangelist and bishop. We should remember also the important part that he played for so many years in Church Union negotiations in South India, and the fact that he has been one of the outstanding leaders of the Church of South India ever since its inauguration in 1947. It is therefore not to be wondered at that his attitude to the Church is much more constructive and affirmative than those of his laymen contemporaries Chakkarai and Chenchiah, or of those earlier great laymen Brahmabandhab and Sundar Singh.⁽¹⁾

We have already seen the importance which Appasamy assigns to the Church in his treatment of the pramanas: it is second in authority only to Scripture, and he points out how the idea of such a corporate "body" is lacking in Hinduism. Jesus' understanding of His work in relation to Judaism and to his choice of the Twelve makes it clear that He felt that

"in some special sense God works through a community of people rather than through individuals... The Christian religion holds that not merely individuals but also groups as such in some special way come to know and experience the Spirit of God." (2)

Hinduism, in both the advaita and bhakti traditions, has always stressed the individual experience of God, but this, though essential, is not the whole story. The Christian faith, to be real and effective, cannot be lived in isolation, but must work itself out in the context of corporate life.

(1) It is interesting to remember that Sundar Singh was actually only two years older than Appasamy, and was younger than Chakkarai (b. 1880) and Chenchiah (b. 1886).

(2) AGH 186.

There are nevertheless in Hinduism some corporate tendencies, such as the longing of the Hindu bhaktas to be "devoted to the feet of the saints",⁽¹⁾ and the idea of the gurusala, where the guru gathers his disciples around him in intimate community life. It is important that the Christian Church in India should be familiar with these traditions, and should use them so far as possible.

"We should be constantly on the look-out for such points of contact with the ancient heritage of India." (2)

In 1938, on the eve of the International Missionary Council's world-conference at Tambaram, Madras, there was published, as an Indian reply to Hendrik Kraemer's Barthian broadside The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World, a famous book called Rethinking Christianity in India.⁽³⁾ Though Appasamy did not contribute to this volume he refers with considerable sympathy to the view which it expresses in which the Indian Church of 1938 is pilloried because of its complete subservience to ideas and forms imported wholesale from the West. Western Church organisation is completely foreign to the genius of India, and its effect is to prevent Hindus from being attracted to Christ and His Church. Yet Appasamy will not accept the extreme conclusions of the Rethinking group, as for instance when they say that "the place of the visible Church should be taken by the invisible Holy Spirit."⁽⁴⁾ The Church should indeed be as Indian as possible in atmosphere and in organisation. Full encouragement should be given to the tendencies towards the mysticism of bhakti. But it is possible for mystics to follow their own

(1) AGH 188.

(2) AGH 189.

(3) Rethinking Christianity in India. 2nd edn., Hogarth Press, Madras, 1939. The contributors were G.V. Job, P. Chenchiah, V. Chakkarai, S. Jesudasan, D.M. Devasahayam, Eddy Asirvatham, A.N. Sudarisanam. v. infra pp. 356, 396.

(4) Rethinking p. 95, quoted AGH 195.

line within the institutional and sacramental character of the Church, as was done in the West by mystics like Augustine, St. Francis, St. John of the Cross, etc.⁽¹⁾ Because the Church is one throughout all the world it should be possible for Christians to draw freely on the spiritual experience of saints in every land, while still they must live within the cultural atmosphere of their own country.⁽²⁾

The Teaching of the Church

In the realm of doctrine, it is essential that the Church, as one of the pramanas, should act with authority. Here is something which has no parallel in Hinduism, and yet it is of vital importance if we are interested in the question of truth and falsehood.

"The utter confusion which prevails in Hinduism even on the most fundamental doctrines is due to the lack of a religious organisation to state its doctrines. There is no agreement even on such a fundamental question as, Is there a God?... This complete lack of unanimity is due to the fact that there is no common organisation to pronounce on questions of orthodoxy."⁽³⁾

This brings Appasamy to the point where he posits the need for commonly accepted Creeds, and in an interesting paragraph he gives his own brief summary of the essentials. The Church believes:

"that there is a God, that He is a personal Being, that Christ is the Incarnation of God, that His life and death are the means of the world's redemption and that the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts to help and guide us."

This profound unity of Christian thought

"is due to the existence of the Christian Church and of the part which it has played in the formulation of doctrine. In view of this enormous gain in unity of doctrine, we ought to be prepared to give up some of the religious freedom which individuals have claimed in India, and to submit to the guidance and discipline of the Church which seeks to pronounce upon the orthodoxy or otherwise of doctrines."⁽⁵⁾

(1) AGH 195.
(3) AGH 190.
(5) AGH 191.

(2) AGH 203.
(4) AGH 190.

We see here a genuine acceptance of the idea of "Church Dogmatics", of the Church's duty to define the standards of belief, and until such time as the Indian Church may be in a position to formulate a new Creed or Confession, and even thereafter, in order to demonstrate the universality of the Church Appasamy is in favour of retaining such "Western" symbols as the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

"It has been said in India that these Creeds answer questions which primarily arose out of the Latin and Greek minds... To this the reply is clear. The Hindu mind has not so far gone deep into the fundamentals of the Christian Faith... Only after a long process of meditation and life will a Creed, truly Christian and truly Indian, emerge. Until such a time comes we must use these historic creeds of Christendom.... There are few ways more effective of realising our communion with the other great Christian Churches than by reciting Creeds common to them and us." (1)

The holding of the common faith of the universal Church should be combined with full freedom for the Church in India to develop along its own special lines, rather than in slavish imitation of the West:

"It is to be hoped that as years go by the Indian Church will be allowed complete freedom to follow Jesus in her own way. This may not be the way of Western Christianity, but as long as the Indian Church is sincere and earnest in its effort to understand the mind of the Master and to conform to it, so long must it be considered to be within its rights. The Churches of the West cannot impose upon the new and growing Indian Church all their own doctrines and practices, however valuable they themselves may have found them to be. If such wholesale freedom could be given to the Indian Church, a great deal of the criticism which is now urged against it would disappear." (2)

(8) The Sacrament of Holy Communion

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is often misunderstood by Hindus, and indeed has often been misrepresented. (3) Appasamy's treatment of the

(1) Church Union: An Indian View (CLS 1930) p. 9-10.

(2) AGH 192.

(3) Even Gandhi refers in his Autobiography to stories he had heard of Christians being compelled to eat meat and drink intoxicating liquor. Autobiography, (Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad, 1948) pp. 47-51.

subject is therefore of particular interest, as he expounds it in the light of two distinct Hindu conceptions - that of the nature of food as described in the Taittiriya Upanisad, and of Ramanuja's explanation of the relation of soul and body.

(i) The Meaning of "Food"

In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus teaches that He is the Bread of Life, and exhorts his followers to feed on Him. But how is a Hindu to understand this strange, even revolting conception? Like the Jews, they ask "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"⁽¹⁾ We receive help from the Taittiriya Upanisad which says:

"Food is Brahman: for from food creatures are born; ~~by food the creatures are born~~; by food the creatures thus born live; and into food they enter and perish." (2)

This text implies, in a manner which is not frequent in Hinduism, the fact that matter or the body - here seen as food - may become a vehicle or effective symbol of divine power and grace. Hinduism tends to see the body and its desires as the source of evil. This was the teaching of the early Gnostics, who therefore denied to Jesus the possession of a true human body. The Fourth Evangelist is determined to resist such Docetism, for the Logos has become flesh, and so the body, matter, food are appropriate media for revealing God's grace. This leads Appasamy on to a fine statement of the meaning of the sacramental, and more particularly of the Lord's Supper:

"Behold the living Christ enters into us and forms a part of our inmost self in the same organic way in which food and drink become a part of our being... Christ himself comes into our souls through the elements and abiding in us endows us with His spiritual energy. Through faith we abide in Him. We turn our thoughts to Him in prayer surrendering all we have into His sacred keeping and He comes unto us and directs us from our inner self." (3)

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- (1) John 6.52.
(2) Taittiriya Up. iii.2. Quoted ABM 132.
(3) ABM 142, 147.

The Christian faith, then, does not despise the physical. Christ had a fully human body: our own bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. And through the chosen physical elements of bread and wine Christ Himself comes to us, not corporeally, but to faith. Unlike Hinduism, in Christianity "the physical and the Spiritual are not so different as we make them out to be." (1)

(ii) "This is My Body"

What then did Jesus mean when, at the Last Supper, He broke the bread and said "This is my Body"? Rather than going into the controversies of Western sacramental theology, with their discussion of the real presence, transubstantiation, "in, with and under", etc., Appasamy turns to Ramanuja's idea that all created beings are "the body of God". (2) He quotes Ramanuja:

"All sentient and non-sentient beings together constitute the body of the Supreme Person, for they are completely controlled and supported by him for his own ends, and are absolutely subordinate to him." (3)

So Jesus takes the created elements of bread and wine as the instruments for fulfilling his purpose:

"They were to reveal to men His utter love for them leading to the complete sacrifice of Himself on the Cross..... The bread and wine were to become a new body of our Lord. In tasting them we taste His love.... Truly the bread and wine become the body and blood of our Lord because through them He fulfils His end of making known His love to men and gathering them into the intimacy and closeness of fellowship with him." (4)

It is an impressive interpretation. There is no mention of accident and substance, or even of sign or symbol. Yet God chooses and uses this "body", of bread and wine, and in receiving it we receive the "Spirit" behind it, Christ Himself.

(1) ABM 151

(2) For a fuller discussion of Appasamy's use of Ramanuja, v. infra p. 345.

(3) AGH 206. Ramanuja Sri Bhasya II, i. 9.

(4) AGH 208.

(9) Eschatology

Appasamy's teaching on "Life Here and Hereafter"⁽¹⁾ falls largely under the category of what is now known as "realised eschatology". Eternal life is seen, in the Johannine way, as a present reality rather than as an expectation for the future. Moksa, the life of "rich and active fellowship with the Divine"⁽²⁾ begins now, and does not cease at death. In the words of Kabir,

"If you have union now, you shall have it hereafter".⁽³⁾

Hinduism uses the term jivan-mukta to describe one who in this life (jivan) has become free (mukta). For a jivan-mukta the full experience of mukti or moksa is possible in this life, and so death may be viewed with equanimity. So too the Fourth Gospel teaches that "Life Eternal" consists in the knowledge of God:

"A bhakta need not look forward to death or to some indefinite period after death for the consummation of his longing to live in fellowship with his God. ⁽⁴⁾ He has already entered into the rich possession of eternal life." ⁽⁵⁾

Realised eschatology is, however, only the "present" part of the story, for union with Christ once begun will continue for ever. "The infinite possibilities of the soul can only be realised through eternity." ⁽⁶⁾

(1) AWM Chap. VII Published 1928.

(2) AWM 153.

(3) AWM 160. Quoted from Kabir's Poems, tr. by Rabindranath Tagore, p. 46.

(4) It is strange to find, however, that in The Gospel and India's Heritage (p. 127 ff) Appasamy seems to favour the idea of a modified form of Purgatory (he does not use the word) in which "the soul passes through different stages of growth after the death of the body". He writes, "This Christian doctrine of growth through eternity is free from some of the difficulties attached to the Hindu idea of transmigration." The only Biblical authority quoted is, "In my Father's house are many mansions." (John 14.2). Compare the view of Sundar Singh, v. supra p. 271.

(5) AWM 157.

(6) AGH 130.

(10) Appasamy's Use of Ramanuja

Appasamy's general attitude towards Hinduism will have become fairly clear from the foregoing pages. While taking his stand firmly within the Christian tradition as witnessed to in the Bible and embodied in the Church, he is anxious to free the Church in India from its non-essential Western trappings, and to use many elements of value in the Hindu religious and cultural tradition. Above all he feels himself drawn to the bhakti tradition. ~~Not only had he made~~ a deep study of the Tamil bhakti poets, but his family had been closely associated with Krishna Pillai, one of the most famous of all Christian bhakti poets, and in his work Appasamy had seen and recognised a valid Indian expression of the Christian Gospel, couched in the language of Indian devotion. It was no wonder, then, that Appasamy felt so drawn to the Fourth Gospel, with its deep sense of faith-union with God, and no wonder that he was able to expound the mysticism of this Gospel in terms of the bhakti he loves. He feels that the study of these poems can do much to deepen our own understanding of the Christian faith:

"These and other longings and experiences will send us deeper down into Christ and help us to live and work for a fuller realization of His abiding presence. When we read these beautiful passages not merely from the outside but from the inside, seeking from them spiritual food, our attitude to Hindu thought will change." (1)

Such a study of, and use of bhakti literature will not lead to an eclectic faith; rather

"like some immense cathedral Christianity will rise in India with that majesty and dignity which are specially its own. Whatever we take over from Hinduism will be to Christianity what the buttresses are to a cathedral... To confuse the main structure with the buttresses would be as great a mistake as to confuse Christianity with the elements which it may absorb from Hinduism. The religion of Christ is unique. That which India contributes in virtue of its age-long and God-guided religious history is a buttress to the great structure." (2)

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- (1) AWM 12,13. In Temple Bells Appasamy put this desire into practical form.
- (2) AWM 16. The illustration does not seem a very happy one, as a buttress's job is to keep a building from falling. A new and glorious window to let in light from a new quarter might be more appropriate!

Having established the principle that certain aspects of Hinduism, and especially the personal Theism of bhakti - "the Indian Religion of Grace" as Rudolf Otto called it - may be used to deepen our understanding of the Christian faith, and to interpret it to India, Appasamy finds the philosophical base which he needs in the work of Ramanuja.⁽¹⁾ He writes how, after his return to India from the West in 1922,

"I was particularly interested to study how Ramanuja had constructed into a theological system his deep personal experience of God." (2)

In a paper, Christological Reconstruction and Ramanuja's Philosophy published in 1952,⁽³⁾ Appasamy gives a brief account of the contribution which he thinks Ramanuja has made to Indian theology. He considers that Ramanuja has expounded three fundamental principles which can be of great help in the philosophical construction of an Indian theology.

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- (1) Ramanuja was born, according to tradition, in 1016-1017 (but v. supra p. 145), and flourished at Srirangam in the last quarter of the 11th century. Under the influence of the Vaisnavism of the Alvar bhaktas of Tamilnad he became the great leader of the School of "Modified Non-Dualism" (Visista-Advaita) which, in opposition to the Monism of Sankara, worked out a complete philosophical basis for the doctrine of personal devotion to God which had already been presented in poetical form in the hymns (prabandhas) of the Alvars.

His best known works are:

- (i) Vedarthasangraha, in which he holds that the Upanisads do not advocate the strict Monism of Sankara.
 - (ii) Gita Bhasya, a commentary on the Gita in which he endeavours to prove that the Gita teaches Modified Non-Dualism.
 - (iii) Sribhasya, his greatest work, in which he rejects the teaching of Sankara and expounds his own views.
- (2) ATQ 13.
- (3) International Review of Missions, 1952, pp. 170 ff. The following quotations are taken from this article unless otherwise stated.

a. The Love of God

"Ramanuja is particularly significant, for he realizes with clearness of insight and depth of conviction that God is an ocean of love... In the highly philosophical schools such as those of Sankara, God is immersed in His own bliss and has nothing whatever to do with the struggles and sufferings of mankind. In contrast, Ramanuja holds to the conviction that God is full of love and goodness."

In his commentary on the Gita (18.66) Ramanuja finely expresses the grace of God which comes to meet those who will receive it, trusting only in Him, and not in works of any kind. Krishna's words to Arjuna are thus expounded:

"Giving up all rites, surrender to me alone. The sins which prevent such love beginning have been accumulated from beginningless time; they are of various kinds and are unlimited. The expiatory rites capable of removing them are of various kinds, innumerable and impossible of performance by you, who are short-lived. Give up, therefore, all rites and seek me alone. I am most gracious, the refuge of all the worlds without distinction and the ocean of love towards those who take shelter in me. I will deliver you from all the sins mentioned above, which hinder the beginning of love. Do not grieve." (1)

This teaching on God's love, and the personal quality of surrender to Him is far removed from the karma marga of popular ritual religion, or the impersonal jnana marga of Sankara, and can give to the personalism of the Christian faith a solid grounding in a great Indian philosophical system.

b. Avatara

Unlike Sankara, Ramanuja lays great stress on the fact that God Himself, out of sheer love for mankind, and to save him, becomes incarnate. In taking human form He fulfills the deep longing of mankind for the vision of God. Ramanuja, commenting on Gita 4,5-11, writes as follows:

"The good ... set out to attain me and as my name, work and form are beyond speech and thought, they fail to see me and can scarcely live or eat.. To save them, I, therefore, grant them a vision of my form and work, hold converse with them and destroy those who are in opposition to them." (2)

(1) Ramanuja, Gita Bhasya 18.66. Quoted in IRM article.

(2) Gita Bhasya 4; 5-11.

We have seen how Appasamy accepts the Christian use of the idea of avatara, which Brahmabandhab rejected.

c. Antaryamin

Another conviction of Ramanuja's which Appasamy gladly accepts is that of God as the Inner Controller or antaryamin. (1)

"Just as the soul is within the body, controlling it and directing it, so God is within the world of nature and of human beings, ruling over it from the inner depths."

It is precisely at this point that Ramanuja's "Modified Non-Dualism" is distinguished from S ankara's "non-Dualism". For Ramanuja in a sense all is Brahman, but only in a sense, for he finds room for the reality of both individual souls and the external world. Within the unity of God

"are distinct elements of plurality which ... are yet absolutely real, and not figments of illusion. There are souls of varying classes and degrees (cit) and matter in all its forms (acit), which together are represented as constituting the body of God, standing to Him in the same dependent relation as is occupied by the matter forming an animal or vegetable body towards the soul or spirit." (2)

God is, then, immanent in the world and in human beings, and Appasamy develops the implications of this conception in his writing on the Immanent Logos, on the Spirit, and in general in his exposition of the Immanence of God in the Fourth Gospel.

The Soul-Body Analogy of Ramanuja

But Beyond this exposition of the conception of God's immanence, Appasamy develops a very interesting use of Ramanuja's "soul-body" doctrine of God's relation to the created world, and transforms it into a sort of Christological analogy which he uses, as we have briefly seen, in four different contexts.

(1) God and Creation

He first expounds the idea in connection with the created universe. We may say, he believes, that God has made the entire universe His body:

(1) v. supra p. 295-

(2) A. Berriedale Keith. Art. 'Ramanuja' in ERE.

"As a spirit God has no form... So He creates the world in order that through it His character may be revealed. The world of physical objects is the instrument by which He makes known His nature and evokes the worship and love of His devotees." (1)

This is the "analogy" as Ramanuja himself uses it, in order to avoid Sankara's monism, in which the creation is regarded as essentially no different from the Creator. Here the creation is regarded as real, and God is immanent within it, as the antaryamin.

"There is a Mind or Reason behind the whole world... It is not identical with the world; it is different from the world; but the world lives because of its functioning... Underlying all that we see is the operation of this invisible Personal Power." (2)

Ramanuja's analogy certainly gives to the world a degree of reality, which it does not possess in Sankara's Monism. It is still, however, very different from the traditional Christian conception of creatio ex nihilo. (3)

(ii) The Person of Christ

"Then God took, as it were, a second body, the fleshly organism of Jesus... God revealed Himself to men through the human body of Jesus." (4)

(1) AGH 206. v. supra p. 297 f.

(2) AWM 168 f.

(3) According to Ramanuja Brahman does in a sense act as Creator. At first the universe is in a state of chaos (pralaya), in which matter exists, but only in a "subtle" state. Souls also exist, but are unconnected with bodies. Brahman at this stage is in a "causal" state (karana-vastha). ~~Yet these two states are really the same: the effect is actually the cause which has undergone development~~ Starting from here, creation develops by the Will of God (Brahman) which now takes the "state of effect" (karyavastha). Yet these two states are really the same: the effect is actually the cause which has undergone development (parinama). The difference is, however, sufficient in the view of Ramanuja, to give true reality to the creation, which Sankara does not allow. (Cp. A. Berriedale Keith, ERE. loc. cit). Appasamy does not in fact go into a detailed discussion of Ramanuja's doctrine of creation: he is interested mainly in demonstrating the fact that God is present in the created world, and in all men, as antaryamin or Immanent Logos.

(4) AGH 207.

Here we have the Christological use of the analogy, to illuminate the union of the divine and human in Christ. Instead of the time-honoured terms of Western Christological controversy,⁽¹⁾ which mean little in India, there is an attempt to show that Christ is a single personality, (a union of body and soul), with a fully human, created body, yet within whom God dwells as the Inner Controller.

The analogy might break down if pressed too far in either of two directions:

- (a) It could be pressed too far in the Docetic direction of Apollinaris, by saying that the "soul" of Christ is the Logos, and that therefore He is not fully human.
- (b) It could be pressed too far in a humanist direction by saying that Christ is in this no different from all men, for all are indwelt by the Logos.

Appasamy is at pains to point out the difference between the Incarnate Christ and ordinary men. The Logos is immanent in all men, but they have not understood Him, so God has taken the unforeseen step of "becoming flesh", as "a more effective means of showing God than mere immanence."⁽²⁾ The Logos is immanent in all men: He is incarnate only in Christ. And through faith-union with Christ, Christ comes to dwell in the heart of the bhakta. Immanence is not enough, and so Incarnation is unique.

Some Western theologians have spoken of "the Christological analogy"⁽³⁾ or "the paradox of Grace".⁽⁴⁾ The mystery of the union of divine and human in Christ becomes a type for the paradox of the divine and human elements in

(1) e.g. the terms of Chalcedon 451 which said that in the Incarnate Christ there was one *ὁμοούσιος* and one *πρόσωπον* (these approximately covering the ideas of "personality" and "person"); and two *φύσεις* (natures) - the divine and the human - united together without fusion, without conversion, without distinction and without separation.

(2) ABM 42-3

(3) e.g. T.F. Torrance : Conflict and Agreement in the Church, Vol.I pp.230 ff.

(4) e.g. D.M. Baillie. God was in Christ, pp.114 ff.

the Bible, in the Church, in the Eucharist. Perhaps in this analogy of Ramana-
uja there is a conception which, with proper safeguards, may be more meaning-
ful for the Church in India than the less familiar Chalcedonian formulations.

(iii) The Eucharist

"God took yet another body - the bread and wine which He blessed on the eve of His crucifixion. The Lord of the universe selected bread and wine and made them the instrument for fulfilling His purpose. The bread and wine which He blessed were henceforth to be His body and blood.... The bread and wine were to become a new body of our Lord. In tasting them we taste His Love.... Truly the bread and wine become the body and blood of our Lord because through them He fulfils His end of making known His love to men and gathering them into the intimacy and closeness of fellowship with Him".... "When we open the doors of our hearts, He enters them with His own body and blood at the time of Holy Communion. His Presence becomes real to us. We behold Him full of grace and truth and experience fellowship with Him." (†)

Here the thought appears to be that God takes these elements, and as spirit or soul, i.e. "spiritually", uses them for His purpose of making Christ present to His people, and nourishing their souls. There is no idea of transubstantiation, e.g., associated with the prayer of consecration, but the efficacy of the sacrament is connected rather with God's will to use these elements for a particular purpose. Again the conception seems to have fruitful possibilities.

(iv) The Church

"God took yet another body - His Church. The life of Jesus on earth came to an end... So God planted in the world His Church as an instrument by which His rule over men would become real. The Church was to be another medium through which He would make plain His will and render it effective in the world." (2)

The Church is the Body of Christ. It is a human institution, and yet it is also divine. God is present within it, despite all its imperfections, as the Inner Controller. St. Paul speaks of Christ as the Head of the Body, the Church, rather than its soul, yet surely the Head is thought of in the

(1) AGH 208

(2) *ibid.*

sense of Mind, of "Controller", that which unites and controls the members. So here once again the analogy is helpful: God is not simply "immanent" in His Church. He is dynamically present, directing and controlling it according to His Will and purpose, yet acting through the human institutions, the human members of whom the Body is composed.

The Love of God, the necessity of the incarnation, and the nature of the divine-human union in Christ - these are three points where the philosophy of Ramanuja may be of real help to the Indian Church in its task of formulating its theology, and Bishop Appasamy has rendered a great service in indicating them so clearly.

The Validity of the Ramanujan Analogy

That is as far as Appasamy takes us at this point. Yet, seen eschatologically, perhaps this analogy can take us farther still, and through it we may be able to penetrate to a thoroughly Christian use of the primary Ramanujan analogy, that of God and the world.

The Church is the Body of Christ: and at the same time it is God's instrument for making his will done in the world, and for bringing every thought into captivity to Christ,⁽¹⁾ through whom all things are to be reconciled to God.⁽²⁾ In the first chapter of Colossians Paul brings these two ideas into close connection - the Church as the Body of Christ, and the world - "τὰ πάντα" - as becoming the totally dedicated instrument of God's glory. Christ is the Head of the Body, the Church, in order that He may at last become the "first" in all things, in the whole created world:

καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος, τῆς ἐκκλησίας...
 ἵνα γένηται ἐν πάντιν αὐτὸς πρῶτος. (3)

(1) 2. Cor. 10.5.

(2) Col. 1.20. δι' αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν.

(3) Col. 1.18.

As He is now the Head, the organising principle of the Church, so, at the "End", He will be the "first", the Head, the organising principle of τὰ πάντα. We cannot follow Ramanuja in saying that the world is now the Body of God. But we do believe that the Church is the Body of Christ, and that finally, at the "end", the whole creation will similarly be his, will reflect his glory and be the perfect instrument of his Will. And so this analogy points beyond itself to the final purpose of God for the world, that of "summing up" all things in Christ.⁽¹⁾ Christ is now the Head of the Church, in order that eschatologically He may be the acknowledged first (πρῶτον) in all things.

Thus the Ramanujan analogy, in the three derived meanings which Appasamy gives it, - in relation to the Person of Christ, the Eucharist and the Church - is capable of immediate and meaningful theological use, while it would seem that in its original application - the description of God's relation to the world as that of soul to body - it becomes significant in a truly Christian way only when viewed eschatologically. The mere fact of so using it, however, gives a sense of purpose and direction to the Church's involvement in the world of matter and history, and so this use of the analogy, when so treated, becomes significant and helpful for the Church in India.

Conclusion

In concluding our chapter on Appasamy we should remember that he is not in any way bound to Ramanuja's philosophy, and on many points, such as image-worship, transmigration and caste, he totally rejects Ramanuja's

(1) Eph. 1.10. εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν, ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

teaching. He has, however, found that for him the bhakti tradition, and its philosophical expression in Ramanuja, is the best and most helpful available Indian "instrument" for the proclamation and explanation of the Christian message. Much of Appasamy's life has been given to active Christian witness, in prayer, preaching and social work, and he writes:

"My primary purpose is to discover the main problems and difficulties of deeply religious people in India and to see how best they can be met. I am trying to get guidance not only from my personal experience and knowledge of Christian sources but also from sources other than directly Christian. My main objective therefore is to see how best the systems of different philosophy could help. Though I find... I have got a great deal of help from Ramanuja in this matter..... I am a disciple of Christ, not of Ramanuja."

(1)

(1) In a letter to the present writer, dated 7.1.66.